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Scares over chairs

The future of two schemes which provide people with wheelchairs on the National Health Service hangs in the balance.

As DN went to press, the Government was still sitting on a report into the future of the schemes launched in 1996 with a ring-fenced budget of £50 million over four years.

Campaigners fear that wheelchair services will have to fight for cash from general health budgets if ring-fencing for these schemes finishes at the end of March as originally planned.

The wheelchair voucher scheme gives disabled people a voucher equal to the cost of an appropriate NHS chair, which they can then top up for a better model. The other scheme is for electric powered indoor/outdoor chairs (EPIOCs).

The schemes got into trouble immediately after their launch. The voucher scheme underspent its budget, while campaigners complained of long waiting times for EPIOCs, with some people

on the list for two years.

Staff shortages and variation of what was available across the country affected the schemes, campaigners have said.

In 1998 the Government agreed to a review and asked the York Health Economics Consortium to report on the schemes' performance. Health Minister John Hutton said he would decide their future once he had considered the report.

But Joe Hennessy, vice chair of emPOWER, the umbrella group campaigning for better disability equipment services, said the York report had been with the Government since July last year.

"We have not been made privy to the contents of the report. It is dragging on and all the while we are not seeing any end result," he told DN.

Stephen Bradshaw, director of external affairs at the Spinal

Injuries Association, said: "Obviously, it has thrown up various problems and they have been unable to decide how they are going to handle them."

One of the big issues was whether to keep the vouchers or get rid of them, he said.

Mr Hennessy said ring-fenced funding must continue beyond April.

"It would be disastrous if this went into the general health service pot," he said. "We have pleaded with ministers to continue ring-fencing."

Liberal Democrat health spokesman Paul Burstow said: "We want the Government to declare what the future of the scheme is before it comes to an end."

The Department of Health said it had not decided when the report would be published, and could not say what future funding arrangements would be.



Soldiering on: war veteran Trevor Ireland, 79, was finally able to attend the Normandy Landing commemorations in France as he did not have to quarantine his guide dog Aden. Other guide dogs will also be able to travel now that quarantine rules have been relaxed.

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Scots leading way on BSL

Almost 300 deaf people crowded into the visitors' gallery of the Scottish Parliament on 16 February for the first ever debate on the official recognition of sign language in a UK parliament.

The signed debate discussed the recognition of British Sign Language (BSL) as an official language. Campaigners hope it will be followed by the intro-

duction of a bill proposing the measure before the summer recess.

Members of the British Deaf Association (BDA) Scotland hailed the groundbreaking debate as "a very positive first step".

Liz Mitchell of BDA Scotland said: "Recognition will pave the way for a whole raft of developments to benefit

the 5-6,000 deaf people in Scotland who use BSL, including an improvement in availability of interpreter services."

Several European countries already recognise sign language as an official language. The European Union recommended the move 12 years ago.

At present there are no plans to introduce similar legislation at Westminster.

Conference makes bioethics demands

Agnes Fletcher writes: An international conference on bioethics called for an end to abortion on grounds of impairment and for disabled people's full participation in quality of life debates and decision-making on bioethical issues.

The conference, the first of its kind, took place in Solihull on 12-13 February. Hosted by Disabled Peoples' International (DPI) and the British Council of Disabled People (BCODP), it

brought together 130 mostly disabled people from 27 countries to discuss ethical issues arising from developments in genetics and other aspects of medicine, such as terminal care.

Conference chairman was Bill Albert, chair of the international committee of BCODP and member of the Government's new Human Genetics Commission. Conference resolutions included an absolute prohibition on com-

pulsory genetic testing; a ban on pressurising women to screen or abort on grounds of impairment; and wider availability of accessible, unbiased information during prenatal healthcare.

Chair of DPI Europe Giampiero Griffi, from Italy, told delegates: "Our energy and passion can ensure that the future is a better place because of the important work started at this conference."



Double delight: Eight-year-old twins Charlotte Troop (front, right), who is deaf and has cerebral palsy, and Alice Troop (front, left), who has a hearing impairment, were among 150 young people to receive a Child of Achievement Award on 6 February. The Troops were presented with their awards by (left to right) actress Frances White, Derrick Evans (Mr Motivator) and charity patron John Major MP.

Cannabis debate gathers speed

Cannabis update

A Labour MP said cannabis for medicinal use should be legalised immediately, amid a government split over the drug.

Mo Mowlam, the minister responsible for drugs enforcement, who has admitted inhaling cannabis, is said to be in favour of making the drug available for medical use.

And the Government's anti-drugs "czar" Keith Hellawell has also said that the police

should concentrate on preventing the abuse of hard drugs and take a soft line on cannabis.

However, Prime Minister Tony Blair and Home Secretary Jack Straw fear change would lead to full decriminalisation of the drug.

A Cabinet Office spokeswoman said Ms Mowlam was "all for" medicinal use of cannabis in a safe form if research showed it had medical uses and this was the line of the whole Government.

But Labour MP Paul Flynn, whose early day motion in

favour of legalising the drug gained 108 signatures last year, said: "The law should be changed immediately to allow cannabis to be prescribed in its natural state."

Claire Hodges of the Alliance for Cannabis Therapeutics said: "All they have to do is let us have it from our doctors."

- The UK Medicinal Cannabis Project, which supports the development of non-smoked cannabis-based prescription medicines, has set up a website at www.medicinal-cannabis.org

Media shame

The charity Scope has highlighted unbalanced and insulting reporting about disabled people.

Stop Press!, a survey last year of all weekly and daily national newspapers and all local newspapers in England and Wales, found over 80 offensive terms. "Freak", "moron" and "cripple" were all frequently used.

Liz Daone, Scope campaigns manager, called on the press to overturn stereotypes. She said: "If they don't, they risk increasingly alienating millions of disabled readers and their families."

The Stop Press! report will be released on 9 March, when a campaign pack, showing people how to complain, will be available. £15 (organisations) and £3 (individuals), tel: 0207 619 7251.

• Half the 515 people in the Mind survey *Counting the Cost** said their mental health problem worsened because of negative media coverage. A quarter also faced hostility from neighbours as a result of media portrayal.

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People First needs home

An internationally recognised self-advocacy group for people with learning difficulties could become homeless when it loses its offices in central London.

People First (PF) has until 20 March to be out of Instrument House in London's Kings Cross, which they have rented from Camden Borough Council for ten years. The council has decided not to renew a 30-year lease arrangement it inherited from the former Greater London Council, and the building's owners now plan to redevelop it.

The council is giving money to other groups in the building to help them find alternative premises. However, as PF is not directly funded by Camden, it will receive no such help.

PF had not found any afford-

able and accessible offices as DN was going to press.

PF chairman Michael Brookstein said: "We've looked everywhere but can't find anything we can afford. We're talking about access needs, so we need to be near a mainline station. The underground is completely inaccessible to people who are physically disabled."

Andrew Lee, PF director, said: "People First is being paid to set up self-advocacy groups in Germany, Italy and Austria and to help set minimum standards across Europe. We have people coming here for meetings in June, so getting a new office is crucial."

A council spokesperson said: "We'll do what we can for PF, but our priorities are the organisations that we fund."

Hearing test appeal

Leading medical charity Defeating Deafness (DD) is calling for the widespread introduction of electronic hearing tests for newborn babies.

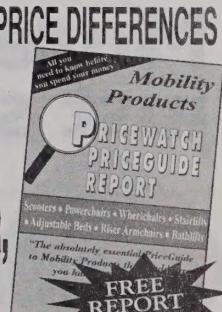
Most local health authorities use a test introduced in the 1960s which involves making noises behind the infant's back and noting its reactions. DD believe they are not using the more effective Otoacoustic

Emissions test, which costs £13 a time, in order to save money.

But inadequate tests mean that half of all babies with hearing impairments remain undiagnosed until the age of two-and-a-half.

A spokesperson for the Department of Health said: "We are looking at how, and if, universal screening can be introduced."

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MOBILITY MATTERS NETWORK

Ambulance anger

A disabled woman is angry that her local ambulance service is refusing to carry people using electric wheelchairs to hospital appointments.

Lisa O'Malley, 30, of Atherton, near Wigan, was told in January that she would have to use a manual wheelchair if she wanted to travel in a Greater Manchester Ambulance Service vehicle to get to a hospital appointment.

She was told that electric

wheelchairs could tip over when going in and out of ambulances, putting staff and patients at risk.

Lisa, who has chronic arthritis and makes regular hospital visits because of poor health, said: "I would not be able to push a manual chair or get round in it, as well as being very uncomfortable."

"I'm angry and shocked. They are taking away my independence," she told DN.

Peter Mansell, chief executive of national disability charity RADAR, said: "If the ambulance service is not a universal service then what is? It has to take the needs of all its potential customers into account."

A spokesperson for the ambulance service said: "We are currently in discussions with social services to find alternative transport facilities for powered wheelchair users."

DN survey results

DN readers who are disabled have on average half the household income of non-disabled readers and more than half of them have no paid employment. Yet 44 per cent of disabled people eligible for free subscriptions would be willing to pay for DN.

This was one of the more surprising findings in the reader survey that DN conducted last November. A total of 2,374 readers filled in a questionnaire about themselves and DN.

The survey found that readers want news and information, live mainly in the south-east, and are most likely to be aged 35-64. Over 60 per cent of the respondents own or lease a car, and over 40 per cent have access to a computer and the internet.

Almost everyone liked DN's name, while a small majority preferred the newspaper format

to a magazine. 60 per cent wanted DN to campaign on their behalf.

Out of all of DN's sections, sport, fun and games and special offers came out poorly.

General advertising was "useful" to over 90 per cent of readers and job advertisements to 75 per cent.

General comments varied from "lacks the edge necessary to be fully effective" to "full of everything I need to know".

Editor Mary Wilkinson said: "We are really grateful for the spirited response and the evidence of firm loyalty to DN."

- Congratulations to the winners of the survey prize draw. A Sainsbury's hamper and case of wine went to Jo Skitteral and Douglas Hindle. Mrs B Millman, Andrew Wattson, S McCallum and Eileen Lewis all won a case of wine.



They're prepared! Fourteen disabled and non-disabled young people have formed a scout troop at the Royal Schools for the Deaf in Cheadle Hume, Manchester. The troop, which is one of the first to be based at a special school, is open to boys and girls over the age of 12 at the school and from the surrounding area.

JOHN COGHLAN PHOTOGRAPHY

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Boy wins school battle

A disabled teenager from Bath has won his fight to attend a local sixth form, and helped to create the first accessible sixth form places in his area.

Fifteen-year-old Edmund Smith (right), who has cerebral palsy and is a wheelchair user, planned to attend Beechen Cliff School in Bath this September to study for A levels in maths, physics and computing.

However, he found that neither Beechen Cliff nor any other sixth forms in the Bath and North East Somerset Education Authority (B&NES) area were accessible. The only alternatives were a further education college or a school in Bristol, one hour's drive away.

Following the example of Russell Newman (DN, November 1998) and other disabled young people, Edmund decided to fight for his right to go to the school of his choice. And after nine months, the council has finally agreed to make Beechen Cliff sixth form and one other school in the

Assessment call

Disability campaign groups are calling for a major overhaul of the Benefits Agency's medical assessments system.

Disabled benefit claimants face poor quality assessments and insensitive treatment, according to evidence gathered by RADAR and the Disability Alliance. The two charities presented their findings to the Social Security Select Committee in January as part of the committee's investigation into medical services.

Claimants of benefits on the basis of incapacity to work or disability are required to undergo an assessment by a doctor. The contract to provide assessments went to the Sema Group for five years in September 1998.

Margaret Lavery, social security officer at RADAR, said: "Our evidence suggests the current system is falling short in many areas and is routinely failing to comply with guidance."



area fully wheelchair accessible.

Edmund's mother, Martine Smith, said: "Edmund was desperate to be in full-time education with his friends like any other 16-year-old. It has felt like a major battle. It's been a time of great anxiety for Edmund and extremely time-consuming for us. We just hope it will mean better access for disabled children in the area."

A B&NES spokesperson said: "Our stated aim in July 1998 was to put our limited resources to use where they can benefit the most people possible. B&NES has a detailed action plan working towards making a secondary school in each area accessible by 2004."

In brief

DN web revamp

The DN website has undergone a facelift. People who visit www.disabilitynow.org.uk should now find the site even easier to use. Improvements include permanently viewable navigation buttons, quicker download times and more comprehensive text tags for images.

Of course, there's still all the usual news, features and info from current and past issues of DN available too.

We'd like to know what you think. E-mail comments to: [damien.vessey@scope.org.uk](mailto:damiens.vessey@scope.org.uk)

Scope awards

The first of Scope's Give it a Go Millennium Scheme Awards have been made.

The awards will help fund projects run by disabled people, including an organic allotment in Plymouth, a creative dance group in Liverpool and a website providing best practice access information for the hospitality industry.

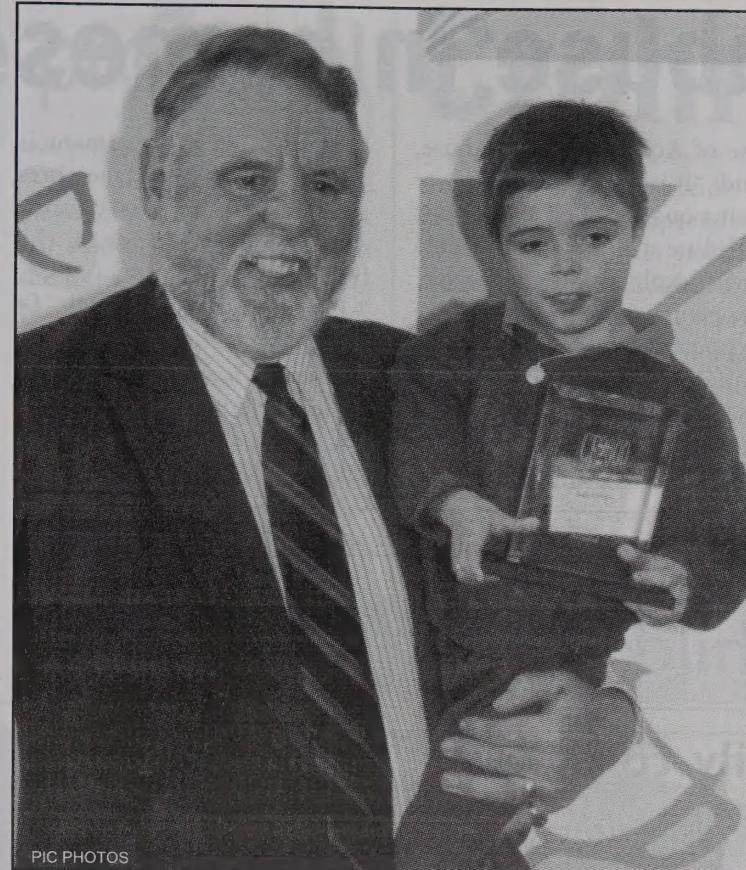
MP under euthanasia investigation

Isle of Wight MP Dr Peter Brand faces police investigation after admitting that he allowed a two-year-old child with leukaemia to die. He was speaking during a House of Commons debate.

Dr Brand told the House that he withdrew treatment and allowed the child to die in 1973 to "prevent further distress".

He made the speech during a debate on Anne Winterton MP's Medical Treatment (Prevention of Euthanasia) Bill on 10 February. He said that, if the bill became law, he and other doctors would be classed as "mass murderers".

A member of the public complained and Hampshire police have confirmed that they will be investigating.



PIC PHOTOS

Congratulations! Dale Craine, seven, from Norfolk, was one of 12 children to win a Cystic Fibrosis Achievers' Award in January from celebrities including Terry Waite. Dale confounded doctors' expectations by learning to walk at the age of three and ride a bike at four.

'Disabled' coke smugglers seized



"The one in the wheelchair has guilt written all over him!"

Customs officers have seized two people pretending to be disabled in order to smuggle cocaine into Gatwick Airport in the frames and wheels of their wheelchairs.

A spokesperson for HM Customs said the two separate incidents in January were part of an ongoing problem, but that wheelchair users were not being targeted for searches at customs.

Care cash row

Changes to care charging have been criticised by a man who will still end up paying out half his wages on care.

The changes are aimed at encouraging disabled people to work. Previously, people receiving cash through the Independent Living Fund (ILF) could only earn £30 a week before their care cash was cut.

But Social Security Minister Hugh Bayley announced in January that, in addition to the first £30 of wages, ILF claimants earning up to £200 a week will be able to keep 45 per cent of their remaining wages, in addition to housing costs. Thereafter, they will continue to lose ILF for every pound earned.

TV and radio producer Colin Hughes, who has muscular dystrophy and earns £30,000 a year, said the changes would still mean half his wages went towards care.

"It is making me seriously reconsider my future in full-time employment," he said.

In any case, Mr Hughes is threatened with losing ILF in March because he has saved £30,000 for a time when he can no longer work.

Frances Hasler, co-director of the National Centre for Independent Living, said the rules were a disincentive to saving.

"It should not be that you are penalised for being a success at your job," she added.

Banking let-down

Disabled people are amongst those most inconvenienced by local bank branch closures, according to a study commissioned by the British Bankers' Association (BBA).

Banking Without Branches, published in January, found that two per cent of customers were experiencing difficulties. Problems were concentrated among people over 80, people with mobility problems and women with young children.

It said customers' needs could be met by cash machines and allowing people to use other banks or post offices.

Derek French, director of the Campaign for Community Banking, said: "We feel the report underplays the size and seriousness of the issues. What we want is innovative action to provide high street banking access to those who need it."

BBA director general Tim Sweeney said: "This report shows that only a small part of the population faces difficulties. Their problems are real and banks will want to tackle the issues, but, as the report indicates, there is no single, viable solution that would satisfy everybody."

In brief

Mobility aids offer

Free mobility aids are available to under-18s from the Royal Variety Club of Great Britain's Easy Riders scheme.

For details, tel: 0207 428 8100.

Scope Fast-Track

Six top companies, including Lloyds TSB, Kodak and B&Q, have joined the Fast-Track programme for disabled graduates run by the charity Scope. There are now 18 companies, government departments and charities involved.

The programme offers graduates two six-month work placements, plus training and personal development. Fast-Track is now recruiting for another ten graduates.

It is also looking for ten graduates for a new IT scheme set up by the Papworth Everard Trust.

The deadline for all applications is 27 March.

For more information, tel: 0207 619 7299.

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Helpline shows abuse in homes

A quarter of all reported abuse of elderly people takes place in hospitals and care homes, according to a new report.

*Listening Is Not Enough**, published by Action on Elder Abuse in February, analysed calls made to the charity's helpline in 1997-1999. A quarter of the 1,421 calls reported

abuse in nursing and residential settings. Calls about abuse in residential and care homes were five times more common than calls reporting abuse in the home.

The charity recommends that everyone working with elderly people should receive appropriate training by 2005.

Ginny Jenkins, chief execu-

tive of Action on Elder Abuse, said: "It is shocking to discover that a quarter of all calls to our helpline are about mistreatment, exploitation and neglect happening in places where we expect that people will be professionally 'cared' for."

Health Minister John Hutton said: "Abuse of older people in any setting is unac-

ceptable. The Government is already taking strong measures to ensure that this cannot and does not happen in the future."

* Listening Is Not Enough, £4 from Action on Elder Abuse, Astral House, 1268 London Road, London SW16 4ER. Elder Abuse Response helpline, tel: 0808 808 8141.

Amputation doc defends operations

A surgeon who removed legs from two men who wanted to become amputees has insisted they are now less disabled than they were before.

Robert Smith, a consultant surgeon at Falkirk and District Infirmary, carried out the above-knee amputations on Englishman Kevin Wright in 1997 and a German man in 1999 after both men had psychiatric assessments.

While some people have sexual fantasies about amputation, he was certain neither of the men had a sexual motive in having the operation, even though Mr Wright ran a website with links to other sites showing female amputees.

The men had a condition known as Body Dysmorphic Disorder (BDD) which meant they felt they had too many limbs. There was no effective psychiatric treatment, Dr Smith said, and he had feared the two men might injure themselves without the operations, which were privately paid for.

"My feeling was that the operation was justified because of the patients' emotional distress. These people regard themselves as less disabled than before," he said.

Ann Darnbrough, DN's agony aunt, said that more effort needed to be put into psychiatric treatments for the condition.

"This is something where you cannot change your mind," she said.

The men's disability would increase as they got older, she said, and "they could come to regret it bitterly".

In brief

No win, no fee

Solicitors Russell Jones and Walker are offering free advice to disabled people wishing to pursue claims for disability discrimination. The London firm will give advice about suitable cases on a "no win, no fee" basis. Call Paul Daniels, tel: 0207 339 6426.

Passengers wanted!

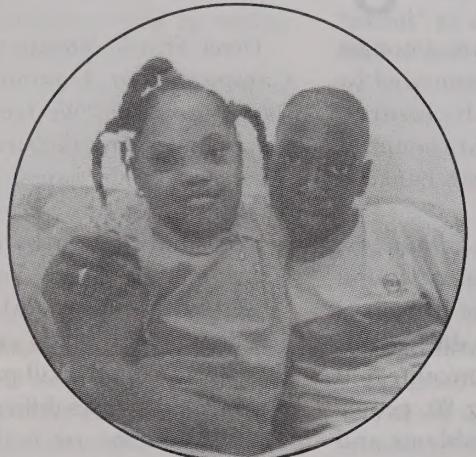
Former taxi driver Geoffrey Smith is looking for passengers for his attempt at regaining the world's longest taxi fare record in 2001. Geoffrey, who is a wheelchair user, is looking for someone with a sense of adventure and six months to spare, preferably aged 40-50 and disabled. Tel: 01844 208933.

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Alan is a fun loving, cute little boy of 7 years old. He loves to sing all the latest hits though he is often out of tune! His likes are Teletubbies, baked beans, mashed potato, cars, anything with flashing lights and/or buttons, being read to and tickled. Dislikes are fruit, sudden loud noises, being taken out of the bath or swimming pool and being bored.

Alan's biggest problem - or bonus depending on the situation - is that he is unable to walk. This is because he has Cerebral Palsy. Alan is a joy to be with, though at times he can be hard work, but ask anyone who knows him they all love him. His good sense of humour is one of his greatest assets. Alan's mother is keen for Alan to be linked up with an outgoing, friendly caring person who can offer regular short term breaks to him.

Tony is a friendly outgoing 12 year old African Caribbean boy, he is profoundly deaf and uses British Sign Language to communicate. Tony is also partially sighted. Tony likes to socialise and take part in active sports such as basketball, football and bowling as well as watching action films. Tony attends mainstream secondary school with full time support which he enjoys.

We are looking for carers who are confident, fluent British Sign Language signers who have some understanding of the deaf community as well as sensitivity towards Tony's visual disability. Tony needs carers who are open to encourage him to develop his independence as he becomes a teenager.

Cyrus is a delightful fairly active 7 year old little boy of African parentage who enjoys listening to music, playing in the park or garden, and watching specific videos repeatedly. Cyrus finds it hard to concentrate for long periods of time, he is very confident with his writing skills and will spend some time writing and copying letters.

One of Cyrus' great loves is water be it a bowl full or a swimming pool; he needs to be closely supervised as his understanding of danger is severely limited, he gets frustrated when he is not understood.

As part of Cyrus' disability which is Autism, communicating is very important. Sign Language or Symbols are used to encourage language. We are looking for carers who can offer Cyrus regular, safe and fun filled times.

We welcome enquiries from single people and couples from all sections of the community.

- If you can offer short or going regular breaks either a day, overnight or several days in your or their home.
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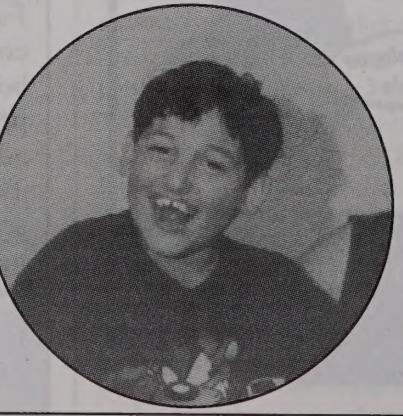
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ISLINGTON COUNCIL



New wage proposal

Mencap has proposed a special employment category for people with severe learning difficulties following a report which suggests that the minimum wage is threatening their jobs.

Workers in the new category would be paid less than the £3.60 minimum as their output is lower. It is hoped this would dissuade employers from cutting hours or not employing people with learning difficulties.

The recommendations are based on the findings of Mencap's report *Minimum Wage: Making It Work**, which

was published in January.

But Michelle Chinery, campaigns officer at the People First self-advocacy group, said: "With the right support and training people with learning difficulties can produce the same amount of work as anyone else."

David Congdon, Mencap's director of public affairs, said: "The problem is a small group of people with very severe learning difficulties. If nothing is done, they are at present entitled to the minimum wage and they will lose their jobs."

*Free, tel: 0207 696 5593.

Crohn's action call

Urgent government action is needed to prevent spreading Crohn's disease via milk, a researcher claimed in February.

Professor John Hermon-Taylor of St George's Medical School, London, said he was certain that a bug called *Mycobacterium avium* subspecies *paratuberculosis* (MAP), which infects cattle, causes Crohn's disease. The condition results in severe diarrhoea and weight loss.

Professor Hermon-Taylor wants a ban on unpasteurised

milk but believes that the organism may also survive the pasteurisation process when milk is heated to 72°C.

The National Dairy Council said pasteurisation time has now been increased to 25 seconds, which kills the bug.

But Professor Hermon-Taylor, whose study has been funded by the charity Action Research, said: "It has not been proven that MAP from naturally infected raw milk is completely killed by pasteurisation at 72°C for 25 seconds, but it is

a step in the right direction."

MAP was almost certainly in water supplies too, he said, and research was needed into this.

"We have a much larger problem on our hands because of environmental contamination and water supplies at risk," he said.

The Government said there was no need for anybody to change their diet on the basis of current evidence and scientists were divided over whether MAP causes Crohn's disease.

Better deal needed

Elderly people with dementia and depression are not getting the mental health services they need, a new report has found.

*Forget Me Not**, carried out by the Audit Commission, found that half of the 1,005 GPs surveyed had no specific training in managing dementia.

Only half of the 850 carers were told what the problem was or how dementia was likely to affect their relative in the future.

There was also a tendency to concentrate mental health services in hospitals and residential care rather than helping people at home.

The report calls for mental

health professionals to give more training to GPs and for greater support to be provided for people living at home.

Andrew Foster, controller of the Audit Commission, said: "Older people and their carers deserve a better deal."

The charity Age Concern said more work was needed in preventing depression as well as curing it.

• The Alzheimer's Society has published a new review of literature *The Needs of People with Dementia and Those Who Care for Them***, which lists research in the area.

*£20, tel: 0800 502030.

**£10, tel: 0171 306 0606.



Sleep tight! Following a £7m upgrade, Scotrail's overnight sleeper trains between Scotland and London are now accessible to wheelchair users. Capability Scotland service user Andrew Buntin (above) was one of the first people to try out the new service, which was launched in January.

CIARAN DONNELLY

In brief

Phone survey

Hearing Concern would like to know of hearing aid users who have experienced problems using mobile phones. The information gathered will be used to push for more accessible telecommunications technology. Contact HC Mobile

Phone Survey, PO Box 5, Kinsclere, Newbury RG20 5YY, e-mail: survey@schael.co.uk

Audible e-mails

The RNIB is testing a system which enables people to have emails read out to them from any telephone. The SpeechMail system developed by Vocalis is already available via several internet service providers.

RNIB helpline, tel: 0345 669999.

AUDIE (dob 4.1.93)

Audie is seven years old. He is an affectionate boy with an appealing smile who loves playing in the garden, watching animal programmes on television and playing with aeroplanes.

Audie has moderate learning difficulties and suffers from mild autism. He is physically healthy and thrives on a strict routine, but needs constant supervision. Audie is able to express his likes and dislikes and his vocabulary is improving. He has a Statement of Special Educational Needs and is currently attending mainstream school.

Audie needs a lot of security, love and attention and we are looking for a family who can offer him a permanent home. He has a close relationship with his birth family and it is expected that he will continue to have some direct contact with them.

If you feel you have the energy, patience and love to give Audie the security he needs, please contact: Caroline Yardley, Adoption and Permanency Team, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, Westway Aid and Information Centre, 140 Ladbroke Grove, London W10 5ND. Telephone: 0171 598 4431.



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DN gives a round-up of some of the disability stories that have appeared in the media over the past few weeks

Government slammed for benefit underspend

Disability campaigners have condemned the Government for underspending on disability benefits by an estimated £754m.

Figures released by the National Audit Office in January show that the Department of Social Security (DSS) underspent on benefits by an estimated £1.7bn in 1998-99.

The underspend was because fewer people claimed benefits than had been forecast. The largest area of savings was disability benefits.

Disability groups argue that the figures show that last year's cuts to Incapacity Benefit, which caused a back-bench Labour rebellion, were unjustified.

Lorna Reith, chief executive of the Disability Alliance, said: "There is now a big question mark over the Government's commitment to ending poverty. The figures show that a large number of people entitled to benefits are not claiming. All the publicity about fraud has made

people reluctant to apply. They feel as if they are under constant scrutiny if they do."

A spokesman for the DSS said: "Over the past few years the number of people claiming Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance has been rising, but that growth is slower than expected. The £754m underspend was based on estimated take-up. At the moment there are no plans for a take-up campaign."

Op to be allowed

A High Court judge ruled in January that a woman with learning difficulties should have a hysterectomy.

The woman's mother, 54, argued that her 28-year-old daughter would not be able to cope with a pregnancy or with looking after a child.

The mother also felt that a hysterectomy would benefit her daughter as it would mean an end to menstrual periods, which her daughter found distressing.

The woman, who lives with

her mother at the moment, is due to move into shared accommodation, where her mother believes she will be at greater risk of forming a sexual relationship or being forced to have sex against her will.

Mencap's director of public affairs David Congdon said: "We believe a hysterectomy is only in a person's best interests if it is based on health rather than social grounds."

The official solicitor's office has lodged an appeal against the decision.

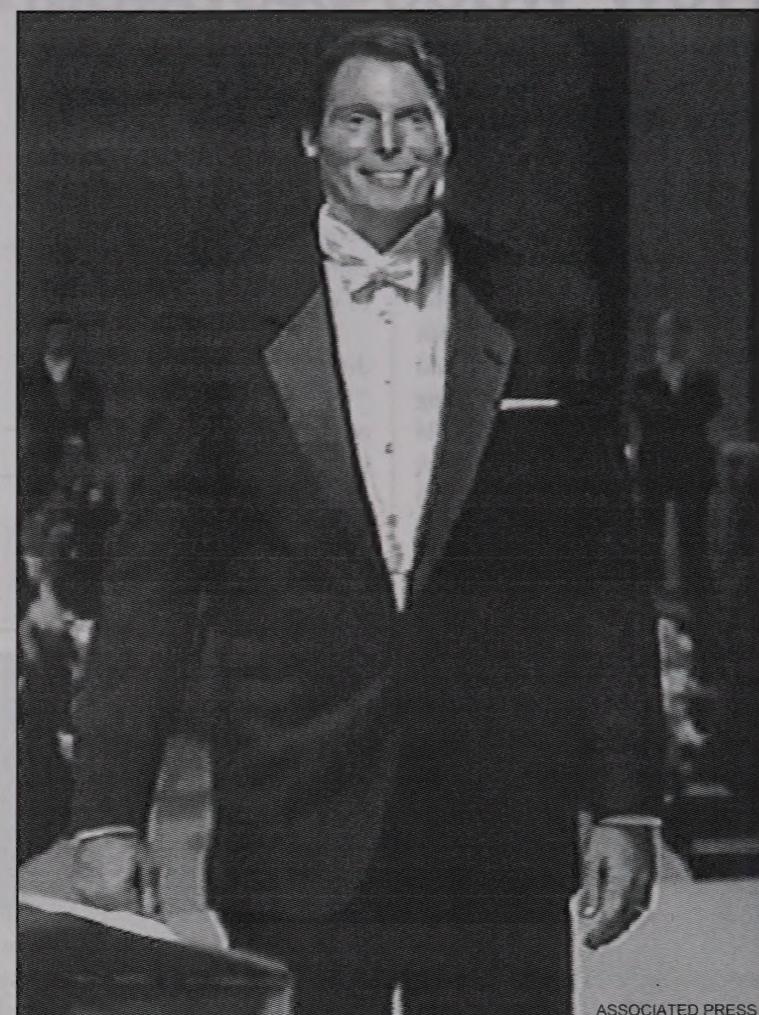
Ward's care inadequate, report says

Alzheimer's patients at a south London hospital continued to experience inadequate standards of care two years after concerns were first expressed, according to a health authority report published in January.

The report by Kingston and District Community NHS Trust found that patients on a ward at Tolworth Hospital in Surbiton were subjected to a disagreeable routine and denied individual care. It found that steps taken after concerns were raised in 1997 were inadequate.

A spokesperson for the Alzheimer's Society said: "There are cases of abuse like this. They are largely due to poor training or lack of staff."

A spokesperson for the hospital trust said: "Some staff had been there for a very long time and were overfamiliar with the patients. The majority of the report's recommendations have been implemented."



ASSOCIATED PRESS

False hope? Disability groups have found "misleading" a computer-generated US TV ad in which spinal-injured actor Christopher Reeve appears to walk. The ad for Nuveen Investments aims to show what impact people's investment could have on the future.

In brief

Artsable lottery win

A three-year grant of £194,500 from the National Lottery Charities Board has been awarded to a new scheme which provides work opportunities in the arts for disabled people. The Artsable scheme is one of five professional projects organised by Workable, which aims to create equality of access and opportunity in the employment of disabled people. Tel: 0207 251 0901.

Voting call

The Right to Vote campaign, which is run by London voluntary organisations, is calling for measures to ensure that all polling station booths are

accessible. Members met with Home Office Minister Mike O'Brien in January to press for mandatory standards for polling station accessibility. They want the standards to be included in the Representation of the People Bill which is currently working its way through Parliament.

Autism scheme

Children with autism will be provided for before they enter the education system, under a new programme that has been launched by the National Autistic Society (NAS).

The EarlyBird programme aims to tackle the "black hole" that many autistic children fall into between diagnosis and school. It will teach parents to be able to understand their child's condition, facilitate communication and, if necessary, modify their behaviour.

EarlyBird is being piloted in London, Leicestershire and Yorkshire. For details, contact NAS, tel: 0870 600 8585. See Parent's voice, page 17.

ACDET appointment

The new disabled person's representative on the Advisory Committee of Disabled People in Employment (ACDET) is Mik Standing. He takes over from Sue Maynard-Campbell, who has become ACDET chairperson. A former equality officer for Disability Wales, Mr Standing is an independent disability equality consultant.

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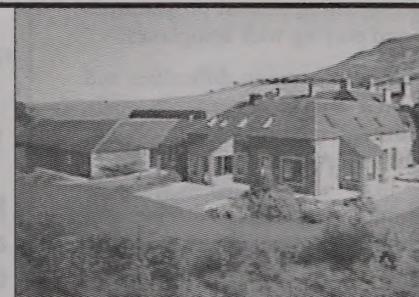


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How do public figures manage a 16-hour day and still crack jokes? Rod Hermeston shadowed David Blunkett to find out

A roomy office with a committee table, sofas and 25 support staff outside the door hint at the importance of the occupant.

A dog basket rests in the corner and a tape machine sits on a table. The squat, ugly Braille machine perched on the desk, standard issue for blind people since 1951, solves this *Through the Keyhole*.

But the office is empty, because Education and Employment Secretary David Blunkett is in Cabinet. It is to be a long day for him.

He usually gets up at about 6.30am, and could be on TV or radio by 7.10am.

"I organise my morning very precisely," he says.

That involves putting Lucy, the guide dog, out and feeding her, doing some work and a spell on an exercise bike, as well as fitting in breakfast before he gets into the office.

Today, Thursday 20 January, he is in Cabinet at 10.30am.

After that he's in the Commons flanked by his ministers, answering education and employment questions.

MPs get to put down a written question in advance but can ask another which has not been revealed. A question from Conservative MP Nicholas St Aubyn on class sizes is followed by one on private schools and assisted places. Blunkett has been anticipating this and took documents home the night before to brush up on figures.

"The critical element is anticipation, thinking through what I would ask," he tells me later.

When he answers a question from Shadow Education and Employment Secretary Theresa May, there is a shift in tone, more brisk and firm.

As part of another answer, he talks about lorry drivers getting computer training in transport cafés. "An entirely new version of chips with everything," he quips.

After the question session, we are off to Manchester, where Blunkett is to speak at a conference. The journey involves a drive to Paddington station to catch the Heathrow Express and a flight from Heathrow to Manchester.

I meet David Blunkett in the Parliament grounds giving Lucy a comfort break. This is another thing he has to remember on his travels – guide dogs need grass. And clambering into the

One man and his dog



ROD HERMESTON

Engaging work: David Blunkett's phone rings yet again

back of the car is a squeeze for me because Lucy is literally under my feet.

First he has to return a call from the Prime Minister's official spokesman Alastair Campbell, who wants Blunkett to do morning radio and TV interviews the next day because Tony Blair is to visit a school. Another job to add to the load.

After that we can talk.

"The biggest challenge is the volume of correspondence, policy papers and newspapers. It takes an inordinate amount of time," he says. "You're working until 11 at night. I try not to do any work after midnight."

"If a document is long, it is put on tape, but if it is short, like quotes and statistics, it will be Brailled," he adds.

Blunkett likes getting things timed properly, perhaps because of the pressure he is under. He interrupts our conversation at one point to ask his driver how much further to Paddington. "One minute," he is told.

In the train he tells me how his days vary. Next week he will be doing broadcasts for the launch of Maths Year 2000. He has a meeting about Frank Dobson's mayoral campaign, lunch with a journalist, a book launch and an interview for Michael Parkinson's chat show.

He breaks off to joke at a radio announcement during the train journey, that it is sunny over Argentina: "Oh, well, we're all delighted about that."

on the flight. "She flies extremely well. They tested it out when she was being trained," says Blunkett.

While it's difficult to get to know someone in one day, I was surprised at the candour with which he admitted that his blindness slows his work rate.

"I have made a bigger effort so that nobody could say I couldn't do the job because I couldn't see. A lot of people don't do their homework and read documents thoroughly, so the fact that I have is often an advantage. But I do wonder how long I can keep it up."

He does constituency work in Sheffield on Friday and spends the weekend there. He is divorced with three sons. The youngest comes to stay at weekends.

"I spend a lot of time on Saturdays and Sundays doing events and work. But we share football, television and his homework," he tells me.

The phone rings and there is someone with constituency business at the other end. A parent doesn't think her child is getting a decent education, and there is someone who was in a bus crash to be dealt with.

We arrive at the annual conference of the Centre for Local Economic Strategies. Blunkett

talks about the New Deal, economic growth and regeneration.

There is a warning that old bureaucracies in Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) will be tackled. It's not the sort of stuff that has you on the edge of your seat.

I groan inwardly as he tries the chips joke again. But he

'I groan inwardly as he tries the chips joke again'

adds: "That one's dying in Parliament as well."

That gets more of a laugh. His appeal is infectious when he is spontaneous like this.

He meets Bernard Stone, executive member for education at Manchester City Council, and Richard Leese, leader of the council. They discuss a failing school. They also talk about the way TECs are to be replaced, and Blunkett quietly but firmly says that he wants to see real change.

The sky is dark as we leave the hotel. Blunkett is off to a constituency function, which won't finish till 10pm.

He is planning to work on his way there. I'm planning to relax on the train home – it has been a tiring day.

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Listen and learn

A new bill aims to make mainstream schools accessible. But what, asks Sally Brown, do those most affected want to see it contain?

By Easter legislation should be presented to Parliament that will effectively outlaw discrimination against disabled pupils in Britain's mainstream schools.

The Government's proposed Disability In Education Bill draws on recommendations made by the Disability Rights Task Force (DRTF) in a report published in December and aims to introduce an enforceable civil rights programme. The recommendations included:

- a strengthened right for children with special needs to a place in a mainstream school;
- a new right for pupils not to be discriminated against unfairly by schools and local education authorities (LEAs), and for reasonable adjustments to be made to school policies and procedures that place them at a disadvantage;
- a new duty on schools and LEAs to plan access for disabled people to premises and the curriculum.

The teacher

Mildred Hughes (*below*) is special needs co-ordinator at St Cenydd mainstream comprehensive school in Caerphilly, Wales, where 50 of the 1,100



pupils are disabled. She believes support structures are the key to inclusion.

"It is possible for a mainstream comprehensive to become inclusive as long as there is a lot of support in

'I hope the bill will encourage the pace of change'

place. This can range from site access for wheelchair users to one-to-one support systems and extra physiotherapy."

Ms Hughes believes attitude is also important. "You've got to have an ethos that everyone is supporting inclusion. Information for staff is important, as is good liaison with the special needs department."

She does not believe inclusion leads to lower academic standards or is any more expensive. "This school has consistently improved GCSE results since they started being published five years ago. And the cost of wheelchairs, hearing aids and so on would have to be addressed in specialist schools anyway."

The pupil

Sixteen-year-old Katie Caryer attends a mainstream compe-

hensive, Fortismere School in Muswell Hill, north London. Katie (*below*), who has cerebral palsy, is a wheelchair user and has an electronic communicator. She would like to see legislation provide more disability awareness training for teachers.

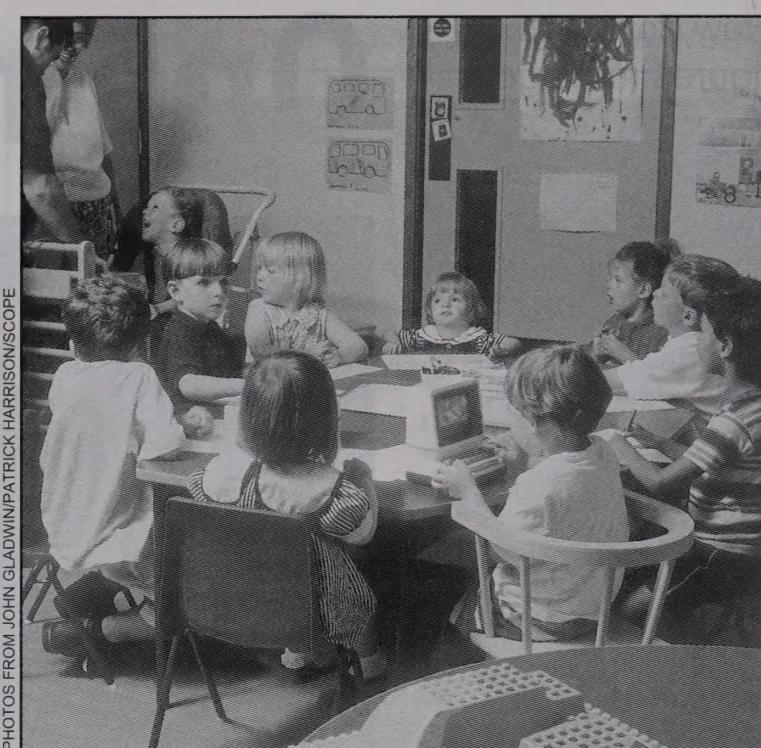
"The main problems I've experienced with mainstream education are to do with attitudes. I have been really badly bullied, not by pupils – they're fine – but by some teachers."

"A lot of people think inclusive schooling consists of lifts and ramps – that's integration," she says. "Inclusive education is where people have the right attitude towards disabled young people, too."

The LEA

Peter John-Wilkinson, head of schools services for Camden Borough Council in London, is concerned about how inclusion will be funded.

"Building ramps, providing more physiotherapy – these things all cost money and we want to see some quite firm government commitments that we will receive the material resources to see it through," he says.



All-round inclusion: the bill should mean massive change

up by a new appeals structure.

"We don't think people should go to court because the emphasis is not on financial compensation and families would be at a disadvantage if the LEA turned

up with dozens of lawyers."

He also hopes the responsibility to increase accessibility will not rest with the individual service providers, the schools.

Mr Lamb believes the effects of the bill will be far-reaching. "It's a massive change. In ten years' time, all children that can be will be educated in the mainstream and there will be a huge reduction in the bureaucracy that parents currently face."

The MP

Theresa May (*below*), Shadow Minister for Education and Employment and former Shadow Minister for Disabled People, has some reservations about inclusion.

"What is important is that we look at what is going to be right for each child. Inclusion covers children with behavioural as well as physical disabilities. We shouldn't push to have some children included if it's not suitable for them."

One of the questions Ms May will be asking is how funding to make schools accessible will be found, but she believes the bill is a step in the right direction for disabled people.

"There is change already taking place and I hope that a bill like this will encourage the pace of that change. But, at the end of the day, legislation isn't enough; it's about changing attitude and culture – and that process is down to all of us."

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Brittle bone trials

Trials have begun on a drug that can prevent brittle bones in children.

Based at Sheffield Children's Hospital, the trials will involve up to 200 children with severe osteogenesis imperfecta, an inherited form of osteoporosis.

Children with the condition have frequent fractures which can lead to impaired growth.

Nick Bishop, professor of paediatric bone disease at the

Holly Girven, three, started the drug in August. Her mother Lynne said: "Now she wants to climb up everything and just doesn't know the meaning of the word careful."

Holly featured on BBC TV's *Tomorrow's World*, which covered the story in February.

Laura Wiggins, ten, has had about 150 fractures. She is not part of the main trial but started on the drug in December.



Bone hope: Laura Wiggins with nurse Emma Bright

hospital, is treating the children with the drug Pamidronate.

He said: "These drugs slow down the rate at which bone is eaten away and they may help to rebuild bone."

Her father, Colin, who chairs the UK Osteogenesis Imperfecta Foundation (UKOIF), said: "I hope it can cut down the number of fractures."

UKOIF, tel: 0800 458 3337.

Drug cost totted up

A drug for people with multiple sclerosis (MS) costs £328,000 to avoid a year's worth of relapses, researchers have said.

Interferon beta-1b costs £10,000 to prescribe per year.

But in relapsing and remitting MS, relapses occur on average every three years and last about one month, the researchers from Newcastle University said.

In this type of MS, relapses can cause a temporary, severe deterioration in the condition.

Dr David Parkin, senior lecturer in health economics at

the university, said that meant that preventing one relapse costs £28,700.

To avoid enough relapses to add up to one year's worth of good quality of life would cost £328,000, he claimed.

The drug is one of a number of beta interferons which are being considered by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE), set up by the Government to make recommendations on medical treatments. It is due to report on MS treatments in August.

The MS Society is calling on

NICE to ensure that beta interferon, which is the only treatment to prevent the course of the disease, is not denied.

Peter Cardy, chief executive of the charity, said: "There is unequivocal evidence that the drug significantly improves quality of life for many people."

Relapses could be very severe, lasting three months, and cause hospitalisation, sight loss and paralysis, the MS Society said. It also questioned the costs calculated by the Newcastle study.

See Comment, page 13.

Molecule clue to Alzheimer's

An Oxford team is to research part of a naturally occurring molecule in a bid to tackle Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases.

The team, led by Susan Greenfield, professor of pharmacology at Oxford University, is looking at part of a molecule called Acetylcholinesterase (AChE).

Normally, the molecule breaks down a chemical messenger in the brain, but it is

also thought that it is involved in cell growth.

Professor Greenfield said it may help cells grow by encouraging calcium to go into them. But in certain cells which might simply be damaged by a bump on the head or a small rupture, too much calcium is brought in when the cells try to regrow and kills them, the team believes.

This may cause Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease.

"There is something special about these cells. When they are damaged, it leads to progressive cell loss. They try to grow again, but by so doing they shoot themselves in the foot," said Professor Greenfield. "We are trying to discover the part of the AChE molecule which has this novel job and block its action."

A treatment could be on the market in ten years, she said.

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Selections for Sydney

Isabel Newstead from Harlow in Essex has been picked to shoot at the Sydney Paralympic Games on 18-29 October.

She already holds medals in swimming, athletics and air pistol shooting and finished sixth in the air pistol event in the 1996 Games despite breaking her hip just two days before.

Ms Newstead will be joined by Deanna Coates from Yately in Hampshire, Karen Butler from Bristol, Claire Hirst, Keith Morris and Keith Hughes.

- Britain's Paralympic wheelchair rugby squad is to be headed by ex-South African soldier Bob O'Shea.

Mr O'Shea said the team is aiming for a bronze medal.

"The competition will be tough, but we have a really good set-up within the squad and confidence is high," he said.

Phoenix wins



Swimmers from the Colchester Phoenix Amateur Swimming Club (*above*) came home with 27 medals from the Double Dutch 2000 Open swimming event in Holland in January. The event is open to disabled and non-disabled competitors.

The Phoenix squad included Natalie Jones, 15, Paralympic hopeful Helen Smith, 15, who is a quadruple amputee, and Robert Pulford, who is training for the 2004 Games with the Disability Sport England squad.

January. Natalie now ranks 10th in the world in her class.

Midlands appeal

Calling all sports organisations or enthusiasts in the West Midlands! *DN* reader Donna Lenton from Dudley is interested in setting up a group in her area and would like to hear

from anyone with an interest in any disability sport. Tel: 01384 566298.

Bristol booters

Bristol City Ability Football Club are looking for new players, coaches and helpers. Contact Mike Robey, tel: 01225 404599 or fax: 01225 044629.

In brief

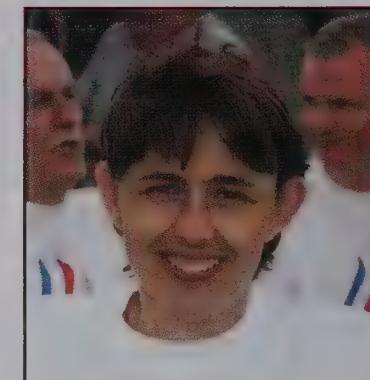
Powerlifting victory

Powerlifter Natalie Blake of Stalybridge, Cheshire, lifted a new English record of 72.5kg in the 4th English Disabled Powerlifting Championships in

Team talk

Tanni Grey-Thompson

Game for a laugh



Ego can be a terrible thing, especially for an athlete. I found that out to my cost this month, when I was persuaded by my husband Ian to join his basketball club for training.

With lots of talk about cross training (and other such fancy words) I was persuaded that it would be a "good laugh".

Anyway, along I went and, although I am very fit (from ten training sessions a week), I now realise that I am fit to wheelchair race and not to play basketball. I suppose it helps if you can throw, catch and shoot (which is where my real problem lies). Two hours into the session, I was starting to feel the strain, but a comment about me being a girlie obliged me to play for another hour.

By the end I could barely leave the gym, let alone get into the car, much to the amusement of Ian. I know now that you should listen when your body tells you it is time to call it a day.

I found that Ian had registered me for the "league", which apparently means that he finds the worst picture he can of me and puts it on to a passport-type card so that I can go

on court for a game (if you can count four minutes on court "a game"). I like to think that I was selected to play for the Teesside Lions team because of my skill, but I think it was more a case of them not having enough people to play.

I thought I was doing OK, but that was just my ego raising its head again.

I realised how bad I was when the opposing team started telling me what I was meant to be doing. The one time I got my hand on the ball (from a rebound), I looked so surprised that my opposite number told me I had to shoot, and even cleared a bit of space for me to try. Needless to say, it was the worst shot of the game – I missed by miles.

I did, however, provide great amusement on both sides, so all was not lost.

All in all, my ego has taken a bit of a beating lately, but it will get better, so watch out!

Tanni Grey-Thompson is a Paralympic gold medallist.

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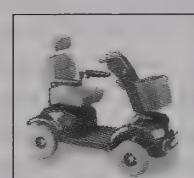
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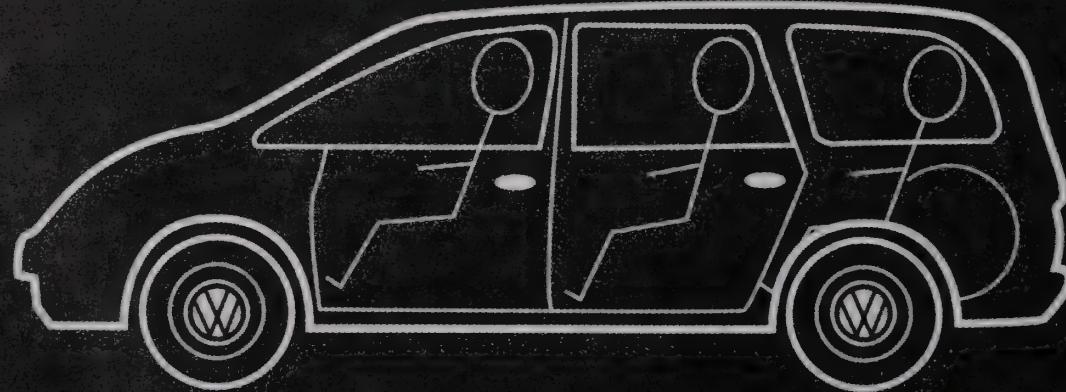
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Eve Rank-Petruzzello is a woman with a mission – as a DRC commissioner she aims to change attitudes to learning difficulties. Sally Brown went to meet her

With two marriages, a career in toy stuffing and a spell on the streets in Sheffield under her belt, Evelyn Rank-Petruzzello has already experienced a lot in her 32 years.

But now the no-nonsense northerner, who prefers to be known as plain Eve, is about to embark on something completely new. When Ms Rank-Petruzzello takes up her post on the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) later this month, she will become the first person with learning difficulties ever to sit on a major government body.

Perched on a chair in the London offices of self-advocacy group People First (PF), she is confident and informal. It has been a busy few days. Since her appointment as DRC commissioner was announced, she has fielded a stream of phone calls and given dozens of interviews.

The strain is beginning to tell and she accepts the offer of interview assistance from a PF support worker.

It was Rank-Petruzzello's involvement with another self-advocacy group that started her political career. She joined her local branch of Speaking Up, in Peterborough, and then became a member of the central management committees of both Speaking Up and PF.



JAMIE FAICER

Powerful voice: Eve Rank-Petruzzello says the Government is going to get "a hell of a shock"

"I just got myself roped in," she remembers. "But it means that I now understand how things work and how people feel. When you're younger you think you're the only person in your situation. But when you meet other groups you realise we're all in the same boat. We're all trying to change society."

And changing society is just what Ms Rank-Petruzzello aims to do in her new post.

"People label us as mentally handicapped, slow, backward. We need to get rid of these words. We may have trouble

reading and writing, but we're all equals," she says.

She recalls examples of this prejudice – a man who recently called her sweetie and a friend who was forced into sterilisation by her mother. "I will get rid of these attitudes. Because if I don't do it, what the hell am I on the DRC for? I am there for everyone with learning difficulties."

All this is change indeed for a woman with humble

beginnings as a railway worker's daughter in New Holland near Hull.

"I went to a mainstream school, but they just used to shove a book in front of me," she says.

At 16 she went to college to study woodwork and welding – "because that's where the careers officer put me" – then on to a Youth Training Scheme course in soft toy stuffing. She got fed up and took off.

"I ran away to Sheffield with just 90p, a sandwich box and the clothes I stood up in. I ended up in a battered wives and pregnant women's hostel – which was stupid, really, because I wasn't a battered wife or pregnant. But it felt good because it gave me a way to my independence."

Ten years on, Rank-Petruzzello is still battling. At the end of a recent meeting, a black cab refused to take her the short journey back to the PF office and she had to walk back through unfamiliar streets. It took her several hours to find her way. But she refuses to let anything stand in her way.

"I want the Government to realise that people with learning difficulties are not stupid," she says. "They're in for a hell of a shock. We're going to make them go at a different speed and get things to us a long time in advance, in an accessible format."

She is also in negotiation about the employment of her DRC support worker.

One thing's for sure: Eve Rank-Petruzzello is going to make the Government sit up and listen. In her own words, she is set to become a powerful "voice" for people with learning difficulties.

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Letters to the Editor



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'Happier days' is not realistic

Minister for Disabled People Margaret Hodge is unfortunately not in touch with the reality of discrimination against disabled children in assuming that the new Disability Rights Task Force (DRTF) report will see an end to '50s style treatment of disabled people (*DN*, February).

Laudable in its aim of promoting inclusion, the DRTF report does not give automatic rights for parents to have their disabled child educated in a mainstream school with their best friends, brothers or sisters.

Schools and local education authorities can continue to deny admission to some disabled children by saying that a mainstream school "would not meet the needs of the child".

They will choose the disabled children they will admit, forcing segregation of the most severely disabled children and those with learning and communication difficulties.

As for the report claiming that children with special educational needs statements "have a legal right to attend the

school named in their statement", nothing could be further from the truth.

A mainstream school in Barnet (specially resourced to accept physically disabled children) was named in my daughter's statement but refused her admission. Now, with my daughter (who is physically disabled) having lost nearly two terms of secondary school education, we are having to wait for a High Court decision.

The DRTF has lost a golden opportunity to clarify, once and for all, a burning and urgent issue. It could have led the way for many educationalists seeking direction and ended the struggle for many families with disabled children who are seeking mainstream education, but are being denied it.

Preethi Manuel
London NW6

Thank you to everyone who applied for our Readers' Panel. We'll be getting back to you. We still need more under-35s. Anyone interested?

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Readers' orange badge beefs

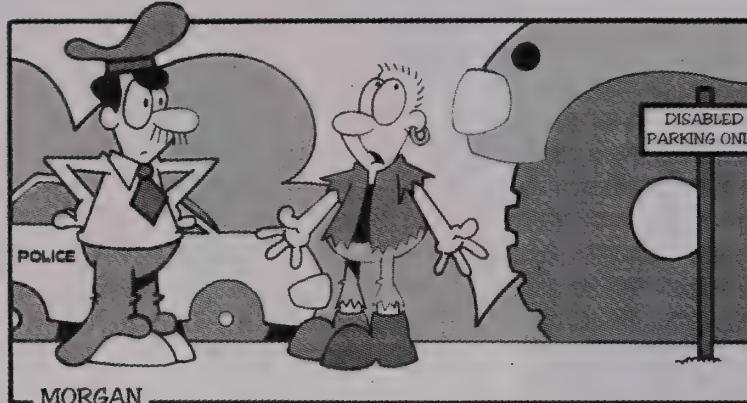
I am so pleased the Government is to review the orange badge parking scheme (*DN*, February).

Strict, nationwide criteria should be set up to curb over-issuing by some local authorities, and a lot more done to stop people using badges for which they have no entitlement. I notice that many able-bodied people use the orange badge of an elderly

If only one could park on a single yellow line for an hour.

Adequate policing of disabled spaces should be a priority.

The criterion for obtaining a badge should be qualification for the higher rate of Disability Living Allowance (DLA). Those who do not need the higher rate DLA, or the elderly, should go through the same rigorous procedure to get their



"...Er, yes, officer, I do have 'special needs'...well, kind of."

relative to park in a disabled space, leaving the old person in the back of the car whilst they whizz off to do the shopping.

I am an independent wheelchair user and when I visit St Thomas' Hospital, I shop in central London, but parking can be a real nightmare.

orange badge as people go through to get DLA.

Jenny Spiers
Dunsfold, Surrey

I would press strongly for the following:

1. Legislation for the provision of a specified percentage of

disabled parking spaces in all municipal and private car parks, including on the highway, so that far more will be available.

2. Legislation to compel all borough councils to provide these spaces in their car parks and on their highways free to badge holders at all times.

3. Encouragement from the Government to owners of private car parks to monitor more effectively the users of these spaces. Similarly, there should be encouragement for the police to take action against unauthorised parking in disabled spaces during the hours when the wardens are off duty.

Clifford Morris

Aldridge, West Midlands

"Orange badge parking" should be the space needed for the door of the vehicle to be opened to allow access for a wheelchair or for people with artificial limbs – similar to mother and child parking spaces.

Gloria Jackson

Peterborough

Your views are being passed on to Ann Frye, head of the Mobility Unit, Department of Transport. Please keep them coming – Editor

'Wonderful Scottish hairdresser' not to be taken for granted

Mike Oliver complained (*DN*, January) about Margaret Hodge talking of the "wonderful Scottish hairdresser" who learned sign language in order to be able to communicate with a deaf customer.

I'm not sure I would have used the word "wonderful", but it strikes me that learning sign language goes beyond the routine consideration you would expect to be extended from one person to another –

much to be commended, no doubt, but hardly something to be taken for granted.

Does Mike Oliver know sign language, I wonder? Or Braille? Colin Low
London E8

PC pulse

by Dan Batten

Doggone it!

It's official: dogs can improve your social life. According to a study by Drs June McNicholas and Glyn Collis of Warwick University, walking a dog gives "increased feelings of well-being, provides companionship and a sense of social integration". Surely, anyone who has seen a guide dog, or any dog, and its owner in action would have sussed this out – eh, docs?

Porn power

After a lengthy job search, "toldquad" of Dallas, Texas, found a job online, working as a control room technician...for an internet porn company. Todd, a wheelchair user, says he is now a member of a big, happy family and was wrong in his preconceptions of the porn industry. I say how did you manage to fluke the job, you lucky man! Well done to Todd and his employers for spotting talents that others didn't.

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DN3/00

'His computer is a vital link'

Jonathan Harris and his son Oliver have caught the computer bug

My son Oliver, aged five, has autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), which means that he cannot understand the world around him.

Oliver is one of six children. One of our other sons, Thomas, aged nine, also has ASD. He is in a mainstream school and coping very well.

Oliver was diagnosed as having ASD in December 1997. We finally had an explanation for his inappropriate behaviour, delay in speech and language, communication deficit and overall lack of development appropriate to his age.

He seemed to be lost in his own world and my wife and I thought that something had stolen the Oliver that we knew and loved as a baby. We quickly realised that no particular treatment could "cure" him of his autism, but careful, intense therapy over many years would bring out the best in him.

His computer has proved to be a vital link in Oliver's learning development.

In May of last year, local residents and a nearby social club organised a fundraising weekend to buy a computer for Oliver and Thomas as they knew how valuable it would be for them to have one of their own.

Since then, the supplier has gone out of business and we have no technical support if anything serious goes wrong with the computer. We are constantly worried that something may happen which will prevent Oliver and Thomas from using it.

The teachers at Uffculme School, a special school in Birmingham that specialises in teaching children with autism and related learning difficulties, were the first ones to notice Oliver's computing skills. And their patience and care have helped him develop them even further.

He can communicate through his computer. He learns at his own pace, on his own, using Cendant's Jump Ahead software, which is designed for pre-school children. People like Oliver thrive on routine and he likes the predictability of a Windows-based computer program, where the learning is done frame by frame.

He can think one stage at a time, which means the packages he uses are well suited to the way he makes sense of things.

The programs he uses can teach letter, word and colour recognition and are presented in an "autism-friendly" way that makes Oliver feel



Screen test: Jonathan and Oliver vie for a place at the computer — it is a useful tool for both of them

comfortable and reassured that there is no pressure on him to progress quickly.

I am sure that new technology can help other children with the same disability and has enormous potential for the development of their language, communication and creative skills, as we have seen in Oliver.

We have also found the internet a very useful tool, not only for Oliver but also as a resource for us as parents. We

can visit autism-related websites from all over the world and exchange views and information in seconds with people thousands of miles away.

Last year, I became involved in Autism '99, a web-based conference devised by the Oxford company RMR Design and the National Autistic Society (NAS). Delegates from around the world and experts in the field of ASD contributed to a web conference, which was live during November.

The website is still available and it is a remarkable resource.

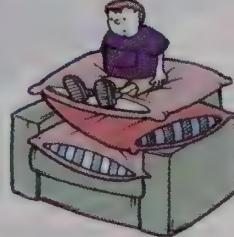
This year sees the launch of Autism Portal 2000, which is also internet-based and will serve as a port of call for a wide range of users, either searching for a specific subject related to autism or purely to guide them through the mass of information you can find on the web.

NAS can be found at www.oneworld.org/autism_uk/, or tel: 0207 903 3555.

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The law dealing with provision for children unable to attend school is in a separate part of the Education Act 1996 from that which covers provision for special educational needs.

In particular, Section 19 of the Education Act provides that local education authorities (LEAs) must arrange provision for children who cannot go to school because of illness, exclusion or for some other reason. That section does not, however, deal with exactly what provision should be made.

The practice amongst LEAs around the country varies widely. Some provide a lot of support for children at home, while others provide very little.

However, in May 1998, in a test case, the House of Lords gave a judgment which established that LEAs cannot restrict

Home schooling law

In January David Ruebain looked at provision for children with special educational needs. Now he turns to the rights of children who may have to be educated at home

the amount of support they give for children who are being educated at home simply because they consider that they cannot afford it.

The case concerned a child with myalgic encephalitis, who, because of her illness, was unable to attend school. East Sussex County Council originally provided five hours per week of home tuition through Section 19.

Because of budgetary difficulties, the council determined that provision of home tuition for this child (and other children) should be reduced to only three hours per week.

The child challenged that decision in the High Court. In the end, the case went all the way to the House of Lords, which determined that the question of resources available to an LEA could not play a part in determining how much provision a child should receive under Section 19.

This is not only important for children who are unable to attend school; it may also affect



Home work: support varies for children being taught at home

cases where LEAs seek to argue that they cannot afford to make provision for children with special educational needs.

Interestingly, a year before this case, the House of Lords gave judgment in another case. This time it concerned services for disabled people (such as home helps) provided by social service departments in accordance with Section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled

Persons Act 1970.

The House of Lords determined then that resources could be a factor when determining whether or not a disabled person needs those services.

In other words, since that case, the House of Lords seems to have backtracked on the question of how resources can affect decisions about provision of services by local authorities. There may, of course, still be

disputes about what provision is required by a child, even ignoring the question of resources.

It is important to remember that not every child who is at home is entitled to a home tutor under Section 19 of the Education Act 1996.

Some children are at home because their parents choose to keep them there (for example, because they do not consider local schools to be suitable). In those cases, unless the LEA agrees, it is not usually possible to require them to provide a home tutor.

But LEAs are required to have pupil referral units, which are, effectively, small schools that make provision for children who are not able to attend ordinary or special schools. For many children who cannot go to school, provision for their education is made there.

David Ruebain is a solicitor specialising in education and disability law, tel: 0208 881 7777, minicom: 0208 881 6764.

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DN's three-page parenting special is packed with tips and tales from all the different stages of parenthood

Having twins has caused upheaval in Nic Hutton's life. But he wouldn't have it any other way

"I'm pregnant": the sweetest words Jane has uttered since "I do".

Like many couples, we had planned to start a family within a couple of years of being married.

But life took a detour in 1994, when a rugby accident left me paralysed from the shoulders down. We were told that children were still possible and, two years after leaving Stoke Mandeville Hospital, we looked at our options.

Starting a family isn't a decision to be taken lightly, but when you are severely disabled it is laden with questions. Would Jane be able to cope physically by herself and would she have any time left for me? Would the children of disabled parents grow up to be any different from other children? How would they bond with me? Were we cheating both nature and fate?

In the end, pragmatism does not get a look-in. Having children is an emotive issue. Jane and I love each other and it felt right.

To get a healthy sperm sample, I had to have a procedure called a vasostomy. In some ways, this is the most

'I shouted encouragement from the end of the room; it was like cheering your team on from the bench'

important operation I have ever had. We now hoped Jane's *in vitro* fertilisation would be successful as well.

Trying to conceive against the odds is a form of torture; you count down days, leaping on any sign of success and, when the little window in the pregnancy kit comes up blank, you can't help but feel you've personally failed. The world suddenly seems full of beautiful Coca-Cola children.

We conceived on the third attempt and were twice as delighted to find that it was twins. The reaction amongst our friends was a mixture of elation and shock. It wasn't just that it was twins; I genuinely think no one truly believed the pregnancy to be possible.

Our house had been designed around my needs and that had to change. Sacrifices

Joining the twin set



Double trouble: Nic and Jane Hutton with Alice and Rebecca

had to be made. A study became a spare bedroom, the carer's room the nursery, my tilt table a storage space.

Jane could no longer push the wheelchair, so we could not go out together on our own. Any little time we had to ourselves became very precious.

On 3 December Jane's contractions started.

Being thoroughly modern, I'd anticipated sitting by Jane's bed, offering soft words of encouragement as the twins entered the world somewhere behind me. It didn't quite work out that way.

It's not easy to hover in a wheelchair at the best of times, and when there's a small army of medical staff and equipment around, it becomes nigh on impossible. Getting close for pillow talk wasn't an option. It was either legs-end or outside. I chose the former and witnessed natural delivery in full technicolour.

I shouted encouragement from the end of the room, feeling a bit removed from the action; it was like cheering your team on from the bench.

After seven hours, Jane gave birth to two girls, Alice and Rebecca. The nurses held them up to my face and I immediately fell in love. These were two little strangers to me, yet I loved them unconditionally.

A week later they were home. Being so premature, they did very little apart from sleep and feed and, lovely though it

The next day, she was in intensive care with a near-fatal dose of bronchiolitis.

Cross-infection is common in twins and soon Alice was also being rushed in. I was back in familiar territory among alarms and monitors, only now it was my loved ones struggling and I was the numbed observer.

I found myself aching to reach out and comfort my children for the first time. And again we asked ourselves the question: was this meant to be?

Though recovery was agonisingly slow, our prayers were answered and the twins were both eventually ready to return home. They have been with us now since mid-January and every day has been a joy and a revelation.

We've been working hard to establish a bond between me and the children, and kangaroo slings which sit the babies on your chest have been invaluable.

At first, the slings we borrowed were too big for them, so we tied a sheet across my chest, opening my shirt above it and popping the children in the pouch it created. Now they are big enough for the proper slings. I talk to them as much as I can during our cuddles, because it's

hard to use intimate tones when they are out of arm's reach.

Another trick is to use the adjustable head on my bed. By tilting it up a little, we can rest a baby on my shoulder against my head, so I can feel her and hear her tiny breaths.

If we tilt the bed higher, we can rest the baby on some cushions facing me on my lap.

'These were two little strangers to me, yet I loved them unconditionally'

This is where I made the first real eye contact with the twins. I love their unblinking gaze and often ask Jane to hold them up to my face.

Of course, there can be a few surprises when they're so close and, if they're hungry, you can find your nose being sucked. None of this lessens the pleasure of having the girls close to me.

These are just some of the joys of parenthood and, as the days pass, I find myself increasingly convinced that our decision to go ahead and start a family was one of the best we ever made.

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RENAULT



With a new baby and a daughter just starting at "proper" school, Rachel Wilson has her hands full

In September last year, my daughter Rebecca reached a major milestone and started school.

Having just turned four, she started in the nursery class of our local infant school, five mornings a week. She has been attending nursery since she was two and a half, but as far as she's concerned, this is "proper" school.

November brought an even bigger change in our lives. We had another baby, Charlie.

I now walk them both to the school each morning. As

'I have always been aware that good access to school is essential if Rebecca isn't to feel marginalised'

a wheelchair user, I have always been aware that good access to nursery and school is essential if Rebecca isn't to feel marginalised.

Neither Rebecca's school nor her previous nursery had good access. Nursery was in a church hall, while her current class is in a Portakabin next to the main school.

In both cases, staff have been keen to address the question of access, without

An education all round

regarding it as a problem, but putting solutions into practice has not always been easy.

When Rebecca first went to school, a wooden board was placed over the rear steps, but this was rather treacherous for the children and me.

The headteacher arranged for a metal ramp to be fitted at the front entrance, although it took five weeks for the council to install it. This is a great improvement as Rebecca and I can now use the same entrance as everyone else.

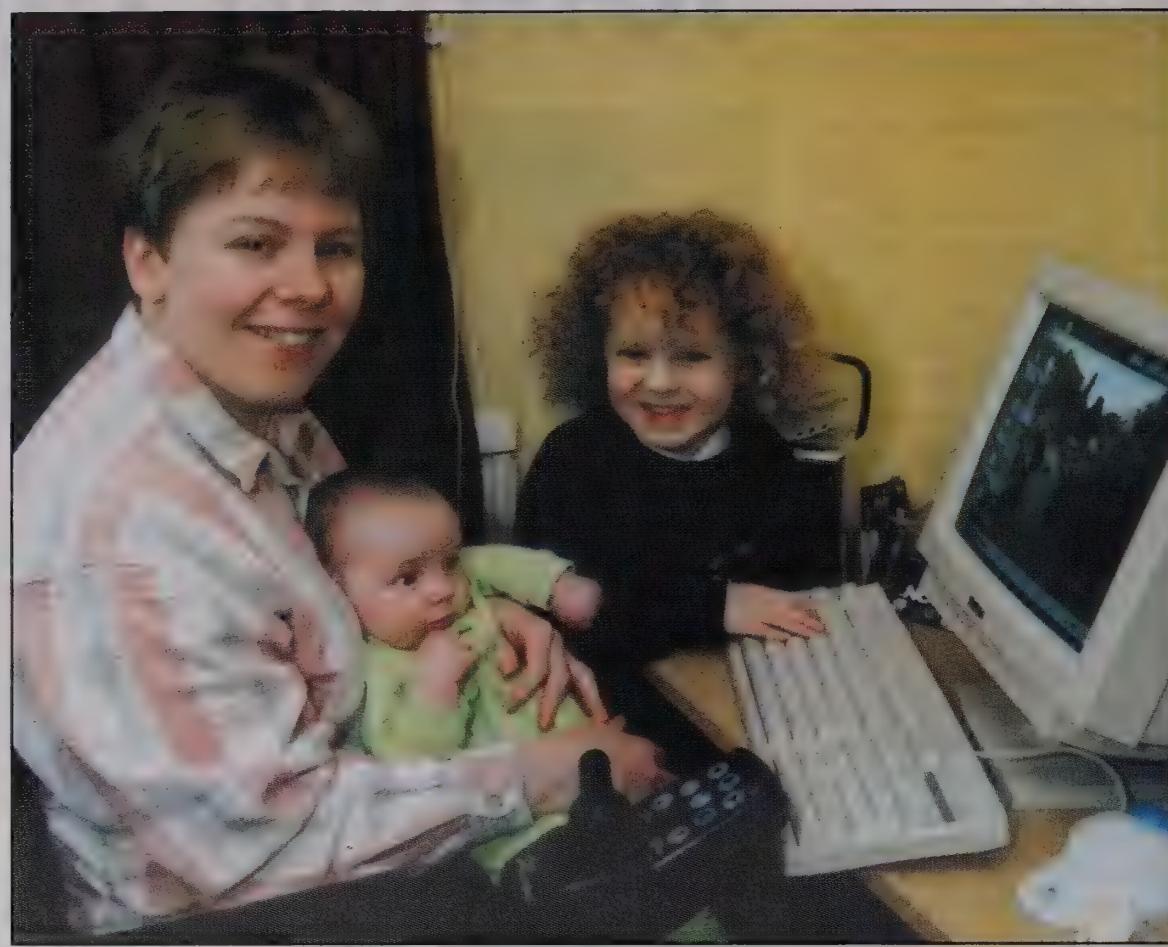
Despite these frustrations, I have been pleasantly surprised to find that the staff have always been positive.

The headteacher told me when I first visited the school that she hoped Rebecca could attend, as "seeing a disabled parent in school would be good for the children".

One of the infant teachers has also commented that my being in school has provided a useful starting point for dealing with questions of disability that she would have otherwise found difficult.

I am pleased that other parents seem comfortable about me answering any questions their children have, usually questions they would like to ask themselves but are too embarrassed to.

I have tried to show Rebecca that my disability is not a negative in our lives and



Clicking together: Rachel Wilson at home with Charlie and Rebecca

ROY BEEVERS

I believe Rebecca doesn't regard the wheelchair as important. She certainly gets irritated when people make comments which she regards as "stupid", like asking her if "she is looking after Mummy".

She got upset recently when I wasn't able to come on a school trip, because I couldn't get on the coach. She said she thought that it was "unfair" that I couldn't get on the bus, but she has never expressed anger about me using a wheelchair.

I take pride in the fact that teachers have commented on Rebecca's maturity and have said that she is well adjusted.

Now that I have Charlie, I plan the morning routine like a military operation.

When Rebecca was little

I was nervous about taking her anywhere, but practice has given me confidence and I now carry Charlie in a portable car seat across my lap.

'My being in school has provided a useful starting point for dealing with questions of disability'

Needing to get Rebecca to school on time has helped me discover that I am able to manage things with Charlie that, with Rebecca, I assumed I couldn't do.

The key to managing is to be organised and stay calm, which is not always easy at quarter to nine when Rebecca

has lost her shoes! In that respect, many of my problems are the same as those faced by anyone with two young children.

I have also become much better at accepting offers of help from friends. When Rebecca was young, I was often reluctant to accept assistance, but since she has been at school, I have realised that all parents help one another and that makes it easier to say yes.

That is not to say that there aren't frustrations. Since Rebecca was a baby, I have had assistance with transport from the social

'The key to managing is to stay calm, which is not always easy at a quarter to nine when Rebecca has lost her shoes!'

services, but I was recently told that, although our needs haven't changed, they are over budget and cannot currently meet the cost of a driver.

The service is now being undertaken by the local Volunteer Bureau, so the children can still have a social life, but my lack of control over this infuriates me. We just make sure we do things when Mark, my husband, isn't at work and can drive.

I feel privileged to watch Rebecca developing into a happy, sociable child and I am proud of Charlie.

There have certainly been frustrations, but there has been much fun along the way. Long may it continue.

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Factfile

- The Disabled Parents Network is a national organisation through which disabled parents and prospective parents can exchange information, give one another support and encouragement and work together to raise public awareness and improve services. Write to: Disabled Parents Network, PO Box 5876, Towcester NN12 7ZN.
- Disability, Pregnancy and Parenthood international is a charity providing a forum for disabled parents and professionals, working with them to share information and experience. The UK information service answers enquiries about all aspects of birth and parenting, equipment, resources and strategies for people with physical, sensory, mental and learning disabilities. Visit their website on freespace.virgin.net/disabled.parents, tel: 0800 018 4730, textphone: 0207 256 8899, e-mail: dppi@eotw.co.uk
- Michele Wates has produced two books: *Disabled Parents, Dispelling the Myths*, Radcliffe Medical Press and the National Childbirth Trust, 1997, £12.50; and *Bigger than the Sky: Disabled Women on Parenting*, Women's Press, 1999, £8.99.

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Bringing care to the community

Michele Wates finds parenting gets easier as children get older. But they should never become "young carers", she says

Teenage kicks

"I don't want you coming to parents' evening," said my teenage son, frowning at my wheelchair.

I drew myself up to my full, seated height (can I still be said to have a height now that I sit down?) and retorted: "I shan't allow your prejudices to prevent me meeting your teachers."

For a couple of days I worried about Ben's attitude to me, until hearing a number of non-disabled mothers report similar conversations with their sons reminded me that it was actually a pretty standard adolescent reaction.

If his objection had not been on the grounds of my being a wheelchair user, it might have been my car or dress sense.

A friend asked her son if he felt embarrassed about having a disabled mother. "Course not," he replied cheerfully. "You just embarrass me full stop."

My daughter Anna has always felt positive about her association with disability through me. She enjoys mixing with my disabled

friends and loves showing off how to do wheelies in a manual chair. Disability is "my thing" and she's proud of it.

I'm not sure what to think about that or about my son. I do know that for both of them,

experiencing disability in everyday life, rather than as something remote and scary, has been a quietly educational experience.

When Ben went on holiday with another family last year,

the mother's back gave out for a few days and she needed to use a wheelchair. It was a relief to her that Ben was there to demonstrate how to get the chair up a curb without jarring the occupant or throwing her on to the pavement.

I am often asked if there isn't a danger that children of disabled parents end up having to help out too much at home. The fact is that if a young person is having to do too much, then there has been a failure.

No young person should find themselves forced into the

position of having to become a "young carer". The focus of policymakers and service providers needs to shift radically from providing services for young carers to providing adequate services to support

'If his objection had not been my wheelchair, it might have been my car or dress sense'

disabled adults in their role as parents.

Part of the reason why I feel strongly about disabled parents being supported is because I believe that we have skills that are valuable – flexibility, adaptability, perseverance, the ability to value difference and to be less idealistic about how we expect our children to turn out.

In some ways, I find it easier now than when the children were young. It's more about talking and giving moral support and it's less physically arduous.

Emotionally, the going can get tough, but as a fellow disabled mother said to me: "They won't see it, because it's just part of their lives, but I like to think I'm a good role model. I don't give up when there are problems."



Family outing: Michele Wates with daughter Anna, 12, husband Edward and son Ben, 14

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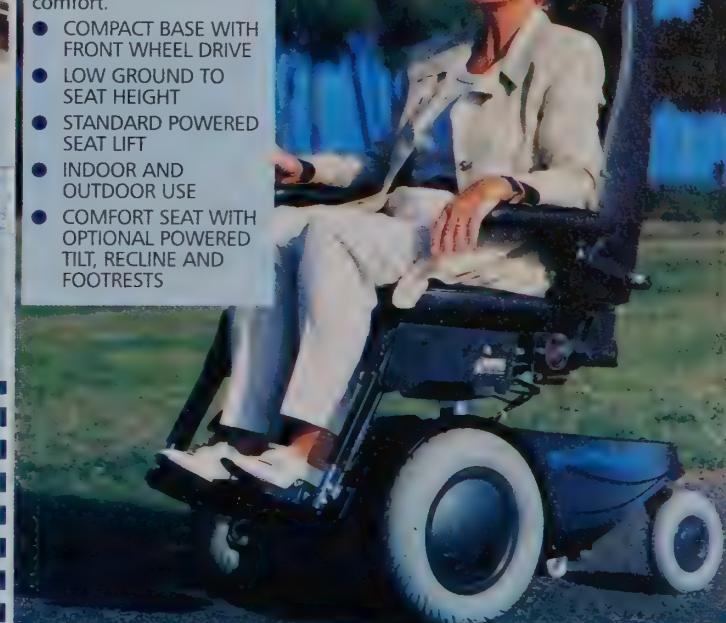
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There's no stopping us! In the final part of our holiday special, we travel to Vermont and Zimbabwe, taking in a beach holiday in Wales on the way. We also announce the winner of our Amazing Holiday competition

Paradise found

Vermont, USA, may tend to attract sporty types, but Frances Loates says it is a great destination for everyone

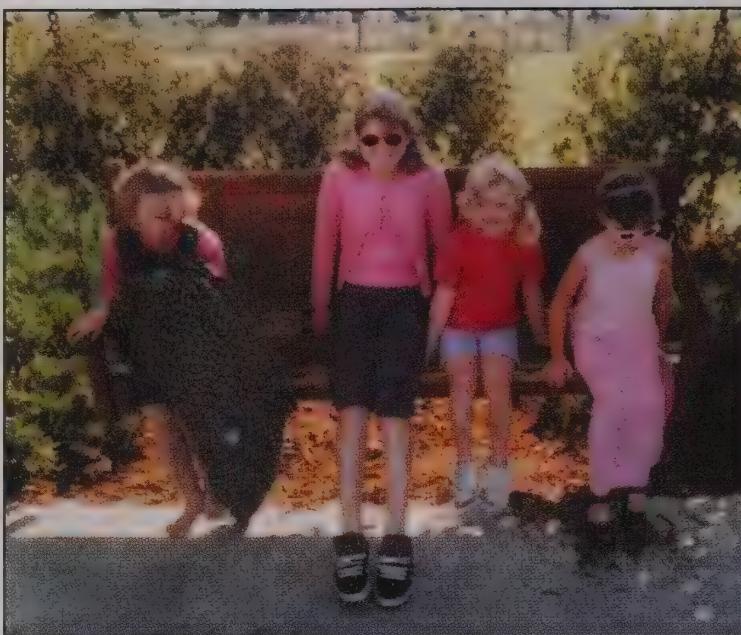
Imagine a place where the colours are sharper than anywhere you have ever been. A place where there are so few people, it's unnerving.

If I told you we found all this in the USA – the land of huge billboards, mega portions of French fries and vast theme parks – would you believe me?

I'm talking about the area of Vermont in the quirky state of New England, which typifies the all-American dream of a golden age filled with *Little Women*, clapperboard churches and maple syrup.

Vermonters are lovers of nature, into recycling and organic products. Giant billboards are banned and in some areas it can be difficult to locate a hamburger joint.

Vermont appeals to skiers, mountain bikers and kayak



Pretty in pink: (left to right) Charlotte, Anna, Melissa and Rebecca

fanatics – so what attraction could it have for a family such as ours, with four girls aged between five and thirteen, the second daughter, Charlotte, not very mobile and with severe learning difficulties?

America is a contradictory nation. As well as striving to be the fittest, fastest and best, it is the country of the golf buggy, alarming levels of obesity and, dare I say, the "couch potato". But there is also an amazing

level of service and a desire to please, so that everyone can get out there and be part of the action.

True, state parks invite users to embark on long and gruelling trails, warning of possible encounters with distinctly uncurlly black bears. But there is also good provision for people who need a flat, wide path to push a buggy or wheelchair and still crave nature at its wildest

and remotest.

Charlotte saw chipmunks, humming birds, brilliant red salamanders and rudbeckias from the comfort of her buggy.

We all returned home with lots of memories: splashing in a blue lake, riding in a ski gondola up to the top of Mount Mansfield and joining a bear

comfy furniture and a large garden complete with swing seat and play area. It was on the outskirts of Stowe, a town with plenty of good restaurants and shops.

Wherever we went, people were happy to stop and chat to Charlotte, unruffled by her unpredictable responses and



Little house in the big woods: the farmhouse the Loates stayed in

trail through dense forest.

Perhaps Charlotte's best moment was choosing her favourite flavour at the world headquarters of Ben & Jerry's

'There is good provision for people who need a buggy or wheelchair and still crave nature at its wildest and remotest'

Ice Cream Factory.

Or maybe it was when she was inspired to gasp "pretty" as she peered into a bucket at the yellow-spotted fish her Dad caught and finally released after much marvelling.

The 19th century farmhouse we rented was full of character, with sloping wooden floors,

over-exuberance.

Staff in public places seemed to have been trained to watch out for people needing extra assistance. It was bewildering at times to be rushed to the front of queues, but it is something you can get used to.

On our return, I chanced upon a promotional leaflet which boasted that "Vermont is family friendly and handicapped accessible. We're all different, proud of it and welcoming".

No, I can't really argue with that.

CanBeDone says prices for a family of four staying two weeks in a Stowe hotel start at £2,655, including return flights to Boston, insurance and a rental car. Tel: 0208 907 2400.

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And the winner is...

In January we asked you to write in about your amazing holiday. Ray and Frances Edwards won with this tale of snow and ice

Our trip was amazing because we never thought it would be possible. It was wonderful to experience a country with good facilities for people with disabilities and heartening to find food

the pink of the sunset on the frozen landscape was indescribable.

Meals were fun. Breakfast was buffet-style, with hot dishes, cold dishes, cereals, berries and at least four



FINNISH TOURIST BOARD

Reindeer ride: sliding over the snow in Lapland

intolerances well catered for.

Where did we go? Lapland, Finland, where light glistened on snow, a building site looked beautiful as builders worked in temperatures of -20°C and falling snow, and we indulged in a reindeer ride (little different from donkeys in Blackpool).

We tried husky sledging at -35°C, when Ray's spectacles and beard froze and Frances' hearing aid failed. The sound of silence was broken only by the yodelling of our eight dogs as we sailed along the frozen river and under the snow-laden trees. Then there was the joy of drinking hot berry juice in a tepee with a fire that never goes out. We drove a snowmobile;

different kinds of bread. At dinner we ate reindeer meat – tough but tasty.

Our Finnish is non-existent, but we studied guide books and asked our guide, Jani, lots of questions. We ventured to Arktikum alone, a fantastic exhibition of Arctic life.

We cannot be blamed for describing our trip as amazing! *Ray and Frances win a weekend at Copthorne Tara Hotel. The runners-up were Mrs P Westcott, Sally French and Janet Swann.*

Winged Fellowship's 2000 brochure has a twin-centre trip to Finland and Estonia. The holiday will cost around £1,700 each. Tel: 0207 833 2594.

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To the top: Cecil Rhodes' grave

with six tons of elephant standing 25ft away was great. We took a 5.30am drive one morning: the temperature was zero when we left but had risen to well over 60°C by the time we returned at 9.30am.

Next was Malangwe Lodge in the Matopos Hills near Bulawayo. Here things were fairly inaccessible, but the hotel had said it would be able to

cope with a wheelchair when we booked and it kept its word.

The South African statesman Cecil Rhodes is buried in that area, about 500ft up a rocky mountain. I would have been happy to sit in the bus and wait, but everyone insisted that I should not miss out. I was carried up in my wheelchair by the manager and guide. I have to admit I was scared, but I was so grateful that I had been given the chance to go to the top.

I am grateful to everyone who helped make our trip so wonderful – nothing was too much trouble. I have memories that I will treasure for ever. *A similar trip in April costs from £1,734 per person, including economy flights with British Airways, transfers and some meals. Wild Africa Safaris, tel: 01483 579991.*



WELCOME TO ALL AT PORTSMOUTH HARBOUR

When it comes to a warm welcome Portsmouth has centuries of experience – home to the Royal Navy for over 800 years and now a world class centre for maritime events. Portsmouth City Council has this year produced a new brochure for disabled visitors and residents of Portsmouth. It is entitled 'Accessible Portsmouth, Guide for Visitors with Disabilities'.

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Portsmouth
HARBOUR

A week in Cardigan Bay is perfect for Jane Parkinson and her son Alistair

Having red hair and freckles, I've never been a sun worshipper, so Wales in the summer suits me just fine. And I couldn't have hit on a lovelier or more welcoming place to go with my young disabled son, Alistair, than Cardigan Bay in Wales.

We found many beautiful beaches to choose from, some of them accessible and some not, but Poppit Sands was my favourite – a stretch of soft, clean sand, with rock pools and boats.

The sands are spacious enough for kite flying, boules and football, as well as paddling and sandcastle building. There is a beach shop, a café and a car park with free disabled parking. They haven't got round to

Beside the seaside



Wonderful Wales: Alistair builds castles on Poppit Sands

putting in a disabled loo yet, but otherwise it's all accessible

and has quiet spots if you're prepared to lug your beach gear that extra 50 yards. We have found that a three-wheel special needs buggy makes beaches a lot easier, especially if the tide's out and the children want to paddle.

Rainy days were no problem. The areas of Pembrokeshire and Ceredigion abound with nature parks and sanctuaries. We liked the Welsh Wildlife Centre and there are plenty of art and craft workshops, restaurants, mills, museums and miniature railways – far more than we could fit into just one holiday.

The highlight of our holiday was a trip in a Canadian canoe

up the Cilgerran Gorge on the River Teifi; you can learn to paddle your own, as a family, but my son couldn't do that so we went with the guide at the front. The friendly organisers did everything in their power to get us safely into the boat. The jetty was tricky – but they're waiting for permission to build a new, accessible one. Once settled in our canoe, the peace and quiet was other-worldly and there were glimpses of all kinds of wildlife.

Other favourites for us included the craft rooms at Newquay, the quaint Rose Bush Restaurant in the converted post office in the Preselli Mountains and time spent in Cardigan itself. The town is smaller than you'd imagine and has an old-fashioned feel to it.

There are plenty of cottages and caravans to rent on the cliffs, on the banks of the estuary and in the countryside. Some have extras like outdoor swimming pools or rowing boats that you can use.

As the Welsh say: "Croeso i Ceredigion!" Jane Parkinson and her son stayed in a self-catering cottage in Cardigan. A house with all mod cons will cost around £300 a week in high season. For more information, including the brochure Discovering Accessible Wales, contact the Cardigan Tourist Office, tel: 01239 613230.

Info

If you're jetting off to the Balearic Islands this year, you could take advantage of Holiday Care's updated information packs on access in Ibiza, Menorca and Majorca. Each sheet costs 50p in stamps (including p&p). Holiday Care, Information Unit, 2nd Floor, Imperial Buildings, Victoria Road, Horley RH6 7PZ, tel: 01293 774535.

Holiday Care has also put together some regional guides to respite care homes throughout the UK for disabled people and carers. Send 50p in stamps for each regional sheet to the above address, stating which area you're interested in.

The Scottish Tourist Board has produced the *Accessible Scotland Accommodation Guide*, which classes hotels, B&Bs and self-catering accommodation into three categories of accessibility. For a free copy of the guide, tel: 0131 332 2433.

The RNIB Holiday Service can help visually impaired people with most travel inquiries, from finding specialist hotels to getting financial assistance to go on holiday. The service has also launched its *Guide Book for 2000*, featuring about 100 hotels and guesthouses in the UK. The guide includes accommodation recommended by visually impaired people, with information on access, information formats, guide dog policies and so on.

To order the guide book (£4.99) or get information from the RNIB Holiday Service, tel: 0845 766 9999 (calls are charged at local rate).

Tripscope has teamed up with Co-op Travelcare to launch an information pack offering practical travel advice to people with impaired mobility. Send an SAE to Tripscope, The Vassall Centre, Gill Avenue, Bristol BS16 2QQ, tel: 0845 758 5641 (calls charged at local rate).

Get back to nature with the National Trust's Links Pass, which is available to disability charities. It gives half-price admission to most National Trust buildings and gardens, as long as you book in advance. Carers/companions of people using the Links Pass are admitted free. Write to: National Trust Membership Department, PO Box 39, Bromley BR1 3XL.

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Film

Simon Minty

For the film *Girl, Interrupted*, the proverbial words "based on a true story" apply. However, the insertion of the word "loosely" would probably have given additional credibility.

Girl, Interrupted is an adaptation of Susanna Kaysen's book of the same name. It tells the story of Susanna, played by Winona Ryder, who after a failed and confusing suicide attempt (confusing because she consumes a bottle of vodka and a bottle of aspirins to get rid of



On the inside, looking out: Winona Ryder as Susanna

a headache) is "voluntarily sent" to a mental health institution. Set in the late 1960s, the film gives an affectionate, if glossy, portrayal of six girls in the institution. It echoes the 1980s films *Stand by Me* and *The Breakfast Club*, showing the bonding of

film doesn't seem to go much beneath the surface of common perceptions of mental illness.

It could have been a more interesting film if it hadn't just concentrated on being a pleasing story.

Columbia Tristar, released on 24 March.

seemingly incompatible heroes when faced with authority and difficulty.

There are dramatic – if sometimes disappointing – moments, such as tranquillisers being forcibly administered and Susanna's best friend Lisa being locked up in a padded cell. Lisa has been in and out of the institution for eight years and is considered "dead inside". We're asked to revel with Lisa in her bravado but then to reject her as a bad influence. It is never simple deciding whether to side with her or not.

I have no direct experience of mental health services, so I have a relatively uninformed point of view. But, for me, the



GUY CHAPMAN ASSOCIATES

In bed with Graeae: David Toole's Edgar tries to stem the decay

Theatre

Nick Lewis

The Fall of the House of Usher is an atmosphere-laden, one-act play written by Steven Berkoff and staged by Graeae.

With a sense of melancholy and fatefulness, brother and sister Roderick and Madeleine, played by Simon Startin and Pamela Mungroo, decide to act out the book they are reading in bed – *The Fall of the House of Usher* by Edgar Allan Poe, which tells of the decline of an

ancient house into putrefaction and incest.

In Roderick and Madeleine's game, a bed is transformed into a stage, ghosts are summoned and the depths of madness are plumbed.

As they degenerate, the pair summon their friend Edgar – played by CandoCo dancer David Toole – to help them. He appears first as a hand and then, magically, in the bed. With his strong presence he tries to stem the tide of decay.

The sense of horror and psychic control is built up as the actors speak Berkoff's stage directions: "Bleak walls, vacant eye-like windows set amidst a few rank sedges." And in an "eye-like window" above the bed, a videoed signer – the screen sometimes spattered with blood – appears.

There is an electric performance by Startin and interesting use of the bed/stage – throughout the play, the actors writhe their way into, onto, through, over and under it.

A compelling evening. *On tour in February and March. Tel: 0207 267 1959.*

Television

Paul Darke

Why is it that the more interesting stuff Channel 4 shows is in the middle of the night and often on different days each week?

Brimstone (C4, 13 January, now continuing on Friday nights) is a fine example. Allowed to return to earth from hell, an ex-cop has to catch escaped demons in order to have another chance on earth. Sounds bizarre? Well, done in *Homicide/NYPD Blue* style, it is. Lots of disability originally used. Adult stuff, but worth a view.

A bit like the series *Gimme Gimme Gimme* (BBC2, 14 January), which is excellent because it challenges where others only patronise. Scenes start with lines like: "Jokes about the handicapped are always the best." Do not watch it if you're easily offended!

The Mrs Bradley Mysteries (BBC1, 16, 23, 30 January and 6 February) and *Gormenghast* (BBC2, 17, 24, 31 January and 7 February) both used disability in a typically Dickensian way. *Mrs Bradley* depends on every social class, disability and sexual cliché imaginable: the bitter lesbian, the circus freak, the asexual stammerer and the limping World War I coward are but a few. I liked the show last year, but we all make mistakes.

Gormenghast tried so hard to be witty and original but died a death on its feet. *Gormenghastly*, as it became known, had Warren Mitchell in a blanket on crutches, Steerpike developing a Phantom of the Operaesque facial disfigurement and the saint-like Spike Milligan playing Death in a wheelchair. It was unfortunate to see Fiona Shaw repeat her role as Christy Brown's doctor in *My Left Foot* to perfection.

From The Edge (BBC2, Tuesday evenings for ten weeks from 18 January) returned with its usual mix of stories made in conflicting styles.

One piece, in particular, took my fancy, as it had some obese chap, who looked remarkably like the hirsute blob that is me, babbling incoherently about the dangers of genetics. Tom Shakespeare, recently profiled in *DN*, was also excellent.

What's in DN next month?**SOCIAL EXCLUSION**

Dr Jenny Morris comments on how young disabled people don't figure in Government policy or research.

WHAT'S YOUR IDEAL HOME?

Agnes Fletcher and Adam Thomas report on this year's exhibition from Earl's Court, London.

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Video top 5**1. THE MUMMY**

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(EV): Mike Myers gets groovy. Yeah, baby!

3. ENTRAPMENT

(Fox Pathé): What were you thinking, Mr Connery?

4. 10 THINGS I HATE ABOUT YOU

(Buena Vista): Teen angst and tantrums.

5. THE MATRIX

(Warner): Sci-fi stormer.

Chart supplied by MIRB.

Closed captions included.

All-singing, all-dancing

The new-look Royal Opera House claims to have access high on its agenda. Anne Davies and Mary Wilkinson take a look

The Royal Opera House in London has come in for some pretty hefty criticism since it reopened in December. Pricing policy, safety, and technical problems have

entrance has an accessible door too), we found that getting tickets or information was no problem: a ramp with rails leads to a low-level counter which includes a pull-out shelf

seating for companions, are reached by five "talking" lifts. Altogether there are 84 easy access seats at every performance.

The wheelchair area we saw had good visibility, and the wheelchair-accessible toilet a few feet away won high praise from Anne. The slope from wheelchair area to auditorium



Space age: all the auditorium's seating tiers have wheelchair access

IMAGE HAYES DAVIDSON/BILL COOPER

produced cancellations and angry punters.

Yet the £214m complex is supposed to be good news for disabled people.

In January, Minister for Disabled People Margaret Hodge presented executive director, Michael Kaiser, with the "two ticks" disability symbol, for being committed to offering equal employment to disabled people. She said: "The Royal Opera House is a shining example of best practice in this area, an example that I hope others will follow."

DN asked Anne Davies, writer, broadcaster and wheelchair user, to check the opera house out. We joined a tour and met members of the access focus group which has advised the opera house and its architects.

Opera goer and wheelchair user Bryan Heiser helped set up the group. He praised the opera house: "They really wanted to make it accessible."

And the new part is, he says. But the 19th century, listed auditorium remains a compromise. "We have struggled with the obdurate reality of a historic building constructed when disabled people weren't catered for."

Entering the opera house from Bow Street (the main

for writing cheques. Anne looked in vain for a toilet sign. The signs still need sorting out, Bryan Heiser admitted.

All five tiers of the auditorium can accommodate people with impaired mobility. Twenty-four wheelchair spaces, mainly in twos or threes, with

entrance highlighted the compromise that's had to be made between wheelchairs, acoustics and an old building; it was quite steep and uncarpeted.

Apparently, the new Linbury Studio Theatre and all bars, restaurants and education facilities are accessible. The bar

we saw had a section of low-level counter and an induction loop. Although we didn't visit the exciting Villar Floral Hall, Anne could see from the bar that all the white paint did not, as she feared, cause glare.

Infrared sound transmission is available in the main auditorium, the Floral Hall and the studio theatre, with induction loops at the box office and in the bars. Every production will have one signed performance. For visually impaired people, there are



Stage-struck: Anne Davies (left) and Mary Wilkinson

Talking Notes at every performance and guide dogs are welcome.

The most exciting part of the tour was going backstage, where everything is accessible.

Scenery is now moved on flooring wagons – all computer operated, so feasible for disabled employees.

So far only 20 of the 600 staff are disabled, working mainly on costumes, wigs and make-up. Now that access is nearly complete, the focus group says it will be turning its attention to disabled employees and performers. An apprenticeship scheme in theatre craft and production is due to start next year.

In one short tour we couldn't see everything, but Anne was impressed nevertheless.

"Essentially it's the same place with the extras added," she said, "so anyone can go."

Two issues remain, however: ticket prices and car parking.

Press officer Chris Milliard says the opera house is revising and simplifying its ticket prices. There are plans to reinstate the 100 standby tickets kept for each performance.

Bryan Heiser says a disabled person and their companion (if required) get a 50 per cent discount on the whole range of seats at all performances. The cheapest seats with wheelchair spaces are £6-£10.

Disabled parking bays near the opera house, which can be used by any orange badge holder, now number seven but cannot be reserved.

Westminster City Council will not provide any more, so, after 6.30pm, when parking restrictions end, it will be the usual scramble to find parking for a West End show.

Tel: 0171 304 4000. There is a disability access extension.

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DN's Just the Job series will resume next month.

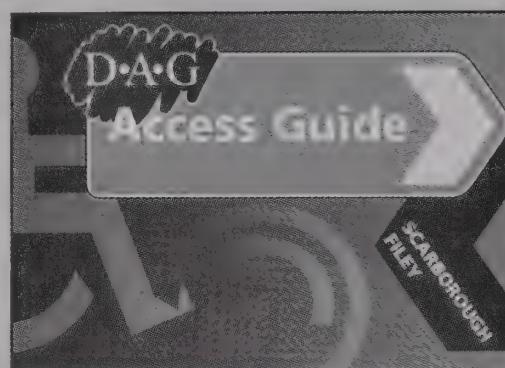
• Publications

RADAR The Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation (RADAR), has published the 6th edition of *Door to Door – a guide to transport for disabled people*. Apart from door-to-door services, it covers travelling in London, national rail, coach, air and ferry travel, and information on European and international travel. There's also further contacts, other publications and concessions available. £8 (inc. p&p) from RADAR, 12 City Forum, 250 City Road, London EC1V 8AF, tel: 0207 250 3222.

NDCS The National Deaf Children's Society has published the guide *Deaf Children and Cochlear Implants*. The guide aims to inform parents in a non-medical manner, describing what the implant is, the implications for their child and the process from assessment to follow up care. Free to parents of deaf children, £6 for professionals. Contact the Society, tel: 0207 250 0123, e-mail: info@ndcs.org.uk

BDA The British Dyslexia Association (BDA) has published *The*

Scarborough and District Disablement Action Group have published the 3rd edition of their *Access Guide* covering Scarborough and Filey, to accompany the *Accessible Holiday Accommodation* guide (DN, October 1999). The guide is split into service sections, such as accountants, chemists, hospitals, clothing shops and pubs. Each section lists the shop/company/outlet names, and lists access details for each one, splitting them between internal and external access features. It also has a list of useful local contact telephone numbers at the end. Copies are free, but £1 p&p is charged to cover costs. For a copy write to the Action Group at Allatt House, 5 West Parade Road, Scarborough YO12 5ED, tel/fax/minicom: 01723 379397.



Dyslexia Handbook 2000 for dyslexic children, their parents and teachers. There are chapters on its causes, recognition, games and software. It also gives contact details of other dyslexia associations. £9, (inc. p&p), from BDA, 98 London Road, Reading, Berkshire RG1 5AU, tel: 0118 966 2677.

The Policy Press has published *Stronger Links – a guide to good practice for children's family-based short-term care services*. Aimed at practitioners, service users or

purchasers, the guide includes access to services, assessments, consulting parents, monitoring and training. It has a glossary of terms, case studies, and other contacts. £14.99 (plus £2 p&p) from The Policy Press, 34 Tyndall's Park Road, Bristol BS8 1PQ, tel: 0117 954 6800, or by using ISBN 1 86134165 2. (30 per cent discount to Shared Care Network members.)

If you have guides to be included in the Information section, please send to DN, address on page 2.

Smart has published *Access the Arts – facilities in and around Surrey for disabled people*. The guide lists venues in alphabetical order, and clearly shows what facilities are available. Entries give brief descriptions of the type of art events held, as well as useful information such as how to get there and box office times. Useful contacts are listed at the back. Also available in large print, Braille and on tape. Free copies from Smart, tel: 01737 210470, minicom: 01737 219506.

- You will be added to a free mailing list to be updated on signed performances etc.



Access the Arts

Facilities in and around Surrey for disabled people

• What's on

Headway, the brain injury association is holding a *National Brain Injury Week*, 13-19 March. Other events this year include: a reception for MPs, 15 March, London; *Service of Celebration* at Westminster Abbey, 24 March; regional social weekend, 17 June, (venue tba); *Midsummer Ball*, 21 June, London; and *Impact 2000 Conference*, 13-15 September, Nottingham. Full details from Robin Langrishe, tel: 0115 924 0800, fax: 0115 958 4446.

Dismantling Disabling Barriers – an exhibition towards an independent life in Sheffield will be held in Sheffield, 29 March. Organised by a group of service users, therapists, doctors and voluntary agencies, it will bring awareness to all in the disability field of local facilities, services and equipment that may help people live more independently. For full details, tel: 0114 271 5915, e-mail: m_marshall@sheffield.ac.uk

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Contact Paul Cassidy or David Reid for brochures or a demonstration. Invatravel is a long established company with years of experience providing for the needs of people with disabilities. Conversions are to Volkswagen compatible design and are recognised converters for VW.

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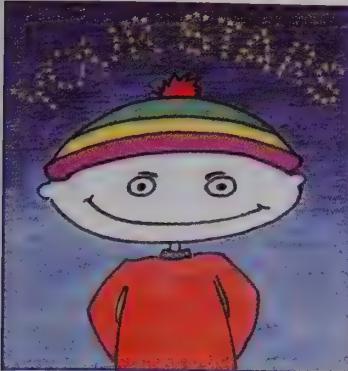
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By DN's astrologer Marion Stanton

PISCES (20 Feb-20 Mar)

 You may get caught up in romance, and with Pluto squaring your sign, decide if it's a phase or meaningful. Don't mislead someone who may be looking for something more than you can give right now.

ARIES (21 Mar-20 Apr)

 Try to get active. Your energy levels could fizzle out around the 20th, which would be a great time to take a break provided you have achieved your goals. Otherwise you could get frustrated.

TAURUS (21 Apr-21 May)

 Your luck should hold for a while, but you may lose out to fear of failure. Have faith and strike when the iron is hot after the 23rd. Take advice from a female relative.

GEMINI (22 May-22 June)

 If negotiations aren't working, are others listening to you? Don't try to ram the point home. When you have the energy you don't have the words. Try to win people over with your actions instead.

CANCER (23 June-23 July)

 What seems secure gets rocky later on in March. Your self-esteem could get bashed from someone close. Don't avoid the situation by throwing yourself into work. Talk things through.

LEO (24 July-23 Aug)

 Don't make any important decisions in the first half of March. Show a bit of caution. Get on with practical matters that don't have long term consequences and bide your time before you consider the big things in life.

VIRGO (24 Aug- 23 Sept)

 March is a good month for making long term plans. Don't tackle problems you can put off. You may feel unfairly challenged, but in reality, this is an opportunity for you to work out your priorities.

LIBRA (24 Sept-23 Oct)

 A loved one who seemed on your side may turn against you. It's frustrating, but their advice may be useful. Your course of action might benefit from some refinement.

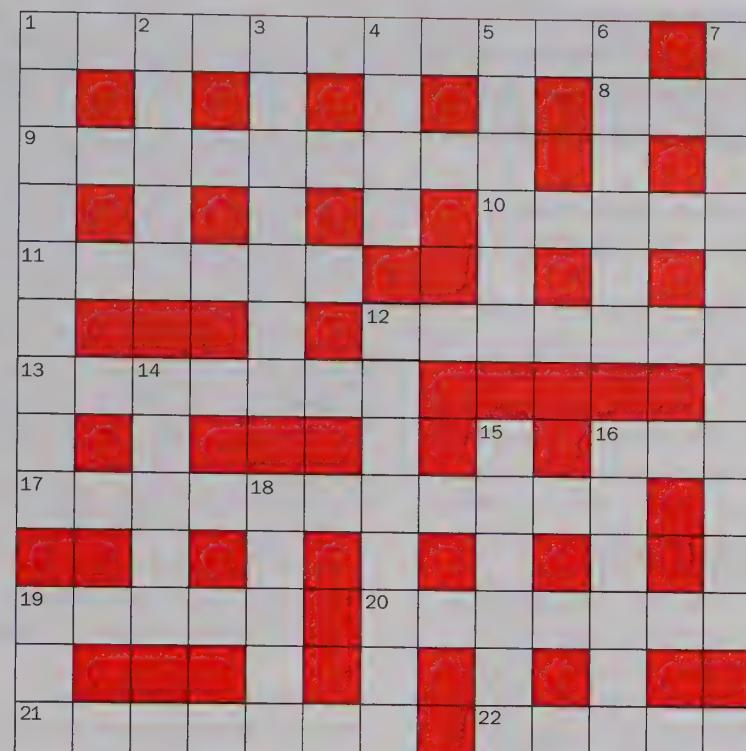
SCORPIO (24 Oct-22 Nov)

 Don't trust in luck or intuition. Discuss things

DN's crossword sponsored by

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ACROSS

1. Type of disability (5,6)
8. Japanese theatre style (3)
9. Innocent (9)
10. Greek character who suffered on a wheel (5)
11. Vinegar-like (6)
12. Early immigrant (7)
13. Type of (English) coffee? (7)
16. Facial bone (3)
17. Hard work (5,6)
19. Used up (5)
20. Slope (7)
21. Selfish driver (7)
22. Recovery of life routine (slang) (5)

DOWN

1. Bruise man (anag)
2. Senseless or boring (5)
3. Large Western country (7)
4. Mountain goat (4)
5. Continually assert (6)
6. Part of a radio (6)
7. Untidy cower (anag)
12. Vast grin (anag)
14. Small furry animal (5)
15. Type of illness (6)
16. Of Israeli origin (6)
18. Portable clock (5)
19. Courteous title for a man (3)

Answers on page 33

COMPILED BY REBECCA REYNOLDS

Scribble pad

and think before you act. Home and family may not mix with work demands. Tread carefully to maintain the equilibrium.

SAGITTARIUS (23 Nov-21 Dec)

 Take a project forward but don't make drastic changes or moves before the 20th. Advice from someone close will help, but be prepared to take matters forward on your own after a while.

CAPRICORN (22 Dec-20 Jan)

 Don't tire yourself out on a project. No one will

thank you for being too tired to deal with responsibilities. Even if you are working to support others they would rather have your attention than your toil.

AQUARIUS (21 Jan-19 Feb)

 The creativity continues to flow from you. Allow yourself to wind down towards the end of the month and have a well-deserved rest. Don't use temptation to help you get to greater heights. It may wear you out and undo the good work achieved so far.

Limerick competition

Here's your chance to show the world your creative skills, and win £100 of WH Smith vouchers and some books, to boot. We want you to write a limerick about anything that tickles your fancy, but nothing rude – we want to print the winning entry in the paper! To get you in the mood, here are two office efforts:

Win £100 and books

**There was a young man with cp
Who was bored with the things on tv.
So he put aside time
To write a short rhyme
And won some Smiths vouchers for free.**

**As a poet, we know you're no sloucher
And you'll win a £100 voucher
From WH Smith
For your limerick, if
It is judged as the best. We don't doubt yer.**

Send your entry, including name, address and phone number, to: Limerick competition, c/o Dan Batten, Disability Now, 6 Market Road, London N7 9PW, or e-mail it to dan.batten@scope.org.uk. Closing date: 25 March. Competition not open to DN staff or associates. No cash alternatives. Editor's decision is final.

Candid Dan



Dan and Co celebrate their version of the Golden Globes

The dynamic duo of Dr Windsor and yours truly were recently reunited on his new home turf of Chichester for a lad's weekend. In order to gain honorary member of the "Southampton Seven", I had to wreak havoc, eat curry and behave like a fruitcake for three days with little in the way of respite. No challenge at all, although the pole vault over the garden wall contests almost spelt disaster.

From sunrise to blackouts, the camera lens captured all. The most daring bit of camerawork came on our campaign to spot "impressive" hairstyles and beards, which were to be listed like English Heritage properties. A magnificent specimen resembling Grizzly Adams was spotted, and committed to celluloid in a surreptitious manner befitting one of Roger Cook's team.

Also committed to tape were "the Southampton Oscars". Traditional categories were eschewed for newer versions, such as "most dismal exam failure" and "most impressive facial hair", with unintelligible babble replacing the acceptance speech. Other awards were on offer, but details of these are best left unuttered.

This festival of stupidity and ladishness ended far too quickly. My next trip away, to help ma and pa celebrate their wedding anniversary, won't be quite so frenetic. Well, you have to be careful when dealing with these older specimens, don't you? Too much exertion could be dangerous, bless 'em.

DOWN'S SYNDROME

If someone in your family has a learning disability ('mental handicap'), he or she needs security – not just now, but in the future when you're no longer here. Mencap, the UK's leading charity for people with learning disabilities, is offering a FREE booklet called *Leaving money by will to people with learning disabilities*. The booklet explains how you can secure your dependant's future and how to avoid pitfalls such as unintentionally reducing their entitlement to benefits.

To receive your FREE copy, just write to:

**Marion Young, Mencap, Room 111C
FREEPOST, 123 Golden Lane, London EC1B 1AA.**

Or phone FREE, quoting reference:111C

0500 243444

Mencap (The Royal Society for Mentally Handicapped Children and Adults). A registered charity No. 222377



*Dear
Ann*

Who better to help you? Ann Darnborough, who has a disability herself, is co-author of the Directory for Disabled People and other guides. Write to her at Disability Now, 6 Market Road, London N7 9PW or e-mail editor@disabilitynow.org.uk

Head injury help

My husband had a serious cycling accident some time back, in which his skull was fractured. He is now registered blind and has been left with other effects of severe head injury. His short-term memory is not good; he has lost the ability to concentrate; and he gets very confused sometimes.

We have had real problems getting help for his vision impairment, taking account of his head injury.

The social services mobility officer, who seemed to have little understanding of the effects of head injury, wanted to teach him Braille. She also tried to get him used to traffic again and seemed not to be able to get to grips with the idea that my husband has an enormous fear of it. He also has great difficulty learning new skills.

I would be very interested to hear from other readers who have a vision impairment as a result of a head injury.

By the way, I am an active member of RoadPeace, an

organisation run by and for people who have been in road accidents.

Ruth, Sherborne

I am sure readers who have had similar experiences will be glad to share them. I wonder if you have also contacted Headway, an organisation that supports head-injured people and their families.

Statement worry

We have a disabled child and are quite anxious about the preparation of a special needs statement. Can you help?

Mary, Birmingham

I think you would find the charity Rathbone CI helpful. You can send them a copy of a child's statement and all the appendices for independent analysis.

They have a new publication, *Making a Statement: the Parents' Guide to the Statementing Procedure for a Child with Special Educational Needs*, which costs £5.

- love and loneliness
- bereavement
- personal problems
- advice and support

Rathbone also have a special educational needs advice line.

It's good to talk

I was appalled at the price that Robert (DN, December) was quoted for a mobile phone. Like Robert, I have a mobile in case of emergencies when I am out and about.

I use a BT Cellnet Easylife phone, for which I buy vouchers. It has all the usual functions and I only need to buy one £20 voucher a year.

The calls are quite pricey, but if you are only using the phone in emergencies, it doesn't matter.

Nicky, Hampshire

I am sure Robert will be really pleased to have more details of readers' experiences.

Lonely heart

I am 30, I have cerebral palsy and I am lonely. I have been hurt by hundreds of women

I thought he was Mr Right

I am so confused that I don't know what to do. I met a nice guy a few weeks ago. I am disabled and so is he. I really thought I had met Mr Right and told him the depth of my feelings, but he said he wanted to take things easy.

Suddenly he stopped ringing me. I called him a number of times, but he never rang back. Then he sent me an e-mail telling me he didn't want to see me again. I was devastated.

I bumped into him recently and he invited me round and told me he had missed me. He asked me out on a date to the cinema and I was in seventh heaven. But then he called to say he would have to change the date and would ring me. He hasn't.

My friends have told me to forget him, but it's impossible. I can't sleep for thinking about him.

June, e-mail

Unfortunately, you know that I am going to say the same as your friends. I want to comfort you, but, at the same time, we have to be realistic.

It is clear that, while you got on well with this man, you were on parallel tracks and, as you know, these never meet. Had you continued your relationship, he would eventually have let you down and that would have been worse. He may be one of life's fly-by-nights, flitting from relationship to relationship. You may in time come to recognise that you have had a lucky escape.

Somehow, however difficult it is, you have to get on with your life. While you may not at present believe this, you will meet someone else who will be special and more reliable. You have good friends – listen to them.

People will then see you and not just the wheelchair.

Headway, 4 King Edward Court, King Edward Street, Nottingham NG1 1EW, tel: 0115 924 0800.

Rathbone CI, 56 Oxford Street, Manchester M1 6EU. Advice line, tel: 0800 917 6790.

RoadPeace, tel: 0208 964 1021.

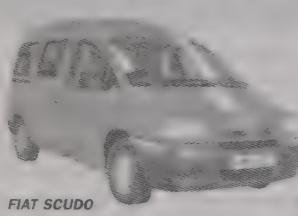
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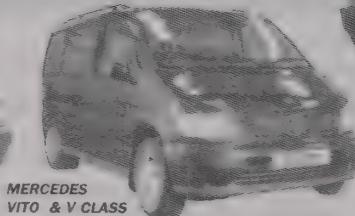
DN's telephone counsellor Lin Berwick can give disabled people and carers advice and support on personal and spiritual problems. Disabled herself, Lin is a psycho-therapeutic counsellor and Methodist local preacher, and she has a postgraduate diploma in homeopathic medicine. If you have something you need to discuss in confidence, talk to her on Mondays 6pm-10pm and Thursdays 1pm-5pm, tel: 01787 882111.

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Hot toast oozing with butter is great, but is your toaster all it could be? Dan Batten tells you what to look out for

Don't get your fingers burnt

A burning question: how often do you consider your toaster? If it's only when you're waiting for your morning slice of bread to brown, a closer look could be in order – especially when you realise that a toaster can cost you as much as £100.

This kitchen marvel isn't always as accessible as it could be, according to a new Ricability guide. Some models are good enough to give you a glow of contentment as you munch on your toast, while others are less friendly.

Buttons and switches on toasters are hot spots for many people. Working out what they do isn't generally a problem, but turning or pushing the things can be if you have co-ordination difficulties. They can be too small, an awkward shape or have poor grip. If they are placed too close together you can end up accidentally pressing the wrong one and end up with charcoal rather than toast.

Lowering the bread into the toaster via a lever can also be a nightmare if you don't have much strength.

Haden's AT280 toaster (£20) scored well, with nice chunky controls that were easy to manage, and the Boots Thick & Thin (£30) browning control was easy to adjust without using much force.

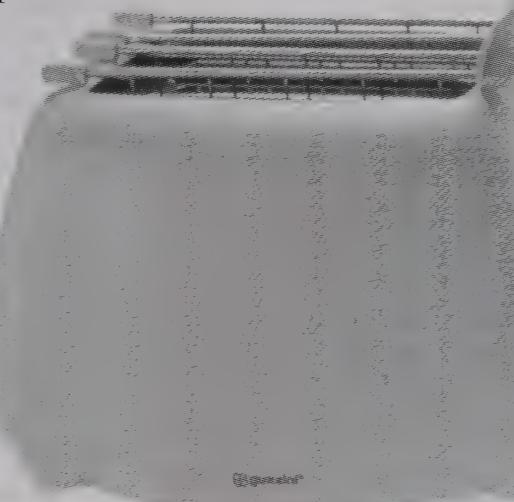
Stability didn't pose a problem among the 29 toasters looked at, regardless of size or shape, but many slid on work surfaces. Putting your toaster on a non-slip mat is an easy solution.

So, your slice is browned to perfection – but can you get it out of the toaster? Practically all of the models tested lift the bread high in the slots, making it easy to pull out and reducing the risk of you burning yourself on the hot metal.

With the Guzzini Gildo 2077 (£50, above, left) you put the bread in cages reminiscent of a chip pan basket to load and lift it from the toaster.

Some models include what is called "coolwall" technology, with a gap between the outer and inner walls. Strangely, some of these models got hotter than those without the

"wall", although never enough to burn you. A general



point: take care with all models when you are taking your toast out – the metal loading slots can get very hot.

Even if your co-ordination is sound, you might encounter a few problems if you have a visual impairment.

Clarity of labelling varied greatly from toaster to toaster, and there were few raised indicators, although it would be easy to mark the browning settings with whatever symbols you use.

The Siemens TT91100 (£100) had raised dots on its cancel button, but that was the same colour as the rest of the toaster.

The Philips HD2531 (£27)

(below) scored well for clear marking. But its browning control was unsuitable for people with poor grip, and this was the case for most of the toasters examined.

Cleaning your breakfast buddy, as you should do regularly to keep it working well, wasn't easy. Most of the models on trial gave

were recessed or stiff crumb trays, ones that were fiddly to replace and ones that had to be tipped up and opened with a screwdriver or coin to clear the crumbs.

If you have a large family to feed or you just love toast, the Morphy Richards Trio (£35) could be for you. It takes three slices, although you can switch it to make one or two slices if you like. It is worth

considering, according to Ricability's testing panel, although the browning control could have been easier.

outstanding, most having a mixture of good and bad features. And some of the bad features were likely to be more than just minor niggles for people with dexterity or visual impairments.

So, while many of the toasters looked hot on the design front, they got a cool response when put to the test.

The best advice when you go shopping is to try as many features as you can before you commit yourself to buying. Then you're much less likely to get browned off when you find you're stuck with a toaster that burns your bread or refuses to let itself be cleaned.

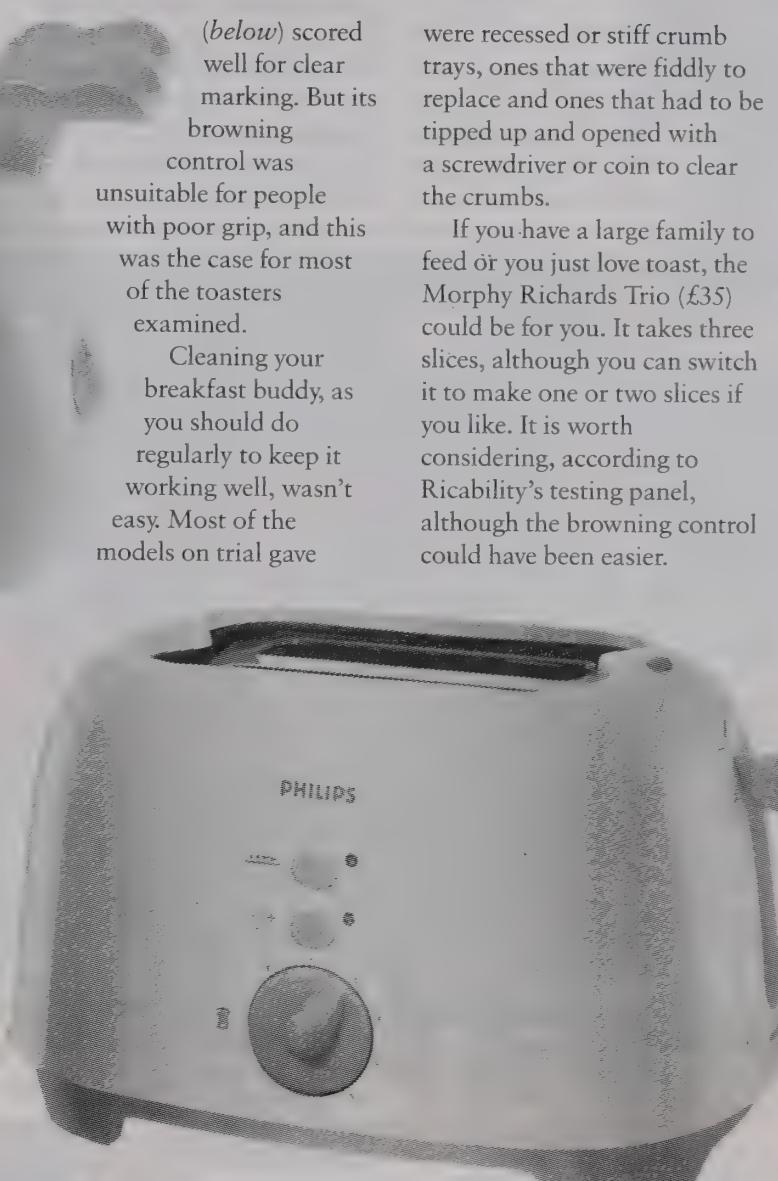
For a copy of Ricability's free factsheet, Choosing a Toaster That's Easy to Use, send an A4 stamped addressed envelope to Ricability, 24 Highbury Crescent, London N5 1RX. Ricability has factsheets on other domestic appliances, including washing machines, vacuum cleaners, microwaves, irons and kettles. Send an A4 SAE for each one to the above address.

Boots, tel: 0115 950 6111.

Guzzini, tel: 0208 646 3883.

Morphy Richards, tel: 01709 582402.

Siemens, tel: 0870 240 0070.



anyone with less than perfect co-ordination a crumbly deal. Among the problems the Ricability testers came across

Overall, none of the toasters Ricability looked at were



HANDBIKES

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EPC also offers choice for wheelchairs



KUSCHALL – QUICKIE – COLOURS

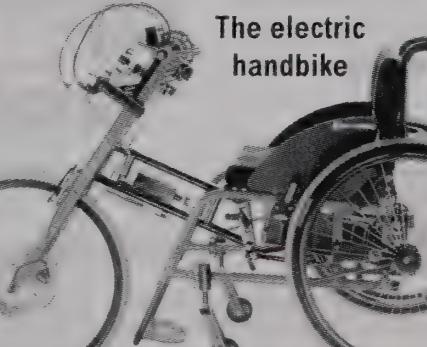
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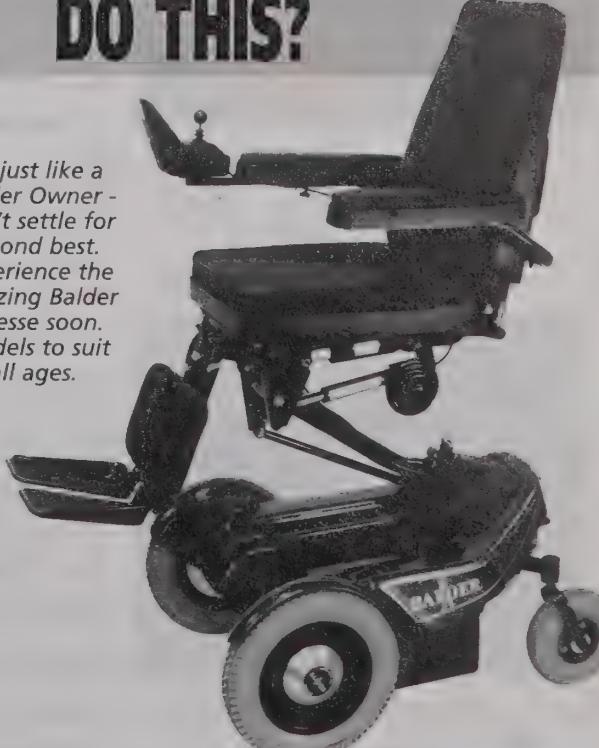
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Bright ideas

Dan Batten goes all 21st century, with ideas on pain relief, phone technology and a new dictaphone diary

 Sick of rattling like a set of spanners as a result of taking so many pills? The Bioflow Magnetic Wristband offers an alternative by stimulating the movement of

electrons in and out of body cells, relieving pain from arthritis, rheumatism and general aches, although it is recommended that anyone with a pacemaker shouldn't wear

one. There is also a Bioflow collar for pets.

From £29.99. For information, call Ecoflow, tel: 01752 841144.

 Are you fed up with asking people to repeat themselves on the phone because you can't make out what they're saying through the wall of noise? Then the Clearsound Megafone from Geemarc could help.

Using direct vibe pulsator technology, sound is sent

straight to the inner ear when the receiver is placed on the bone in front of or behind the ear. Sending sound through the bone means people with mild or even severe hearing loss can enjoy clearer chats on the phone.

£99.99 from John Lewis department stores or from the Megafone helpline, tel: 01707 384455.

 The DN team knows a thing or two about

Wanted!

Do you know of any products that Dan Batten would be interested in for his Checkout column?

Send details and, if possible, a colour photo to Dan at the address on page 2.

getting cramp from using computer mice on a desk all day. Maybe a PCD Maltron K-mat would help us all out. The mat rests on your thigh, taking advantage of the fact that the upper arm is most relaxed when by your side.

£12 including p&p. Contact PCD Maltron, tel: 07004 625876.

 The new EMR Medicard could be a lifesaver if the unthinkable happens. This smart card carries your picture and any relevant medical details. A doctor or nurse can read the information by inserting the card into a reader which is also supplied.

£18 a year. Call Medicard, tel: 0800 169 2108.

 The Voice Mate could be the perfect social aid if you have a visual impairment.

You can put 600 names and numbers into its phone book, while a digital dictaphone lets you record memos to yourself, and an appointments diary means you'll never forget those all-important dates. This information can be read out to you in your own dulcet tones at the press of a button. A speaking clock and calculator are also included.

£150 from Cobolt, tel: 01493 700172.

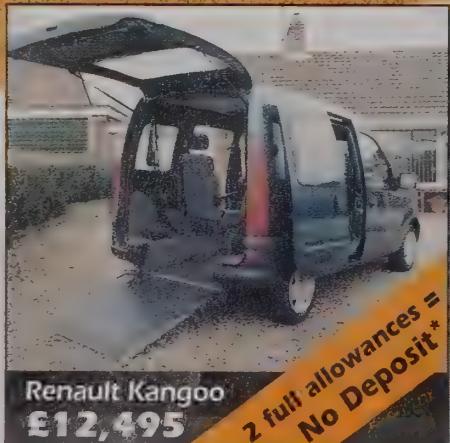
 If you've got a Thyssen Linear Straight Stairlift installed on a staircase where room is tight, you might want to consider adding one of their new hinged circular rails to make it even safer. The last section of the rail folds back, moving the lift out of the way and making it less likely that someone will inadvertently go flying over it.

Manual from £90; powered from £290. Thyssen Stairlifts, tel: 0116 234 4320.

DN cannot guarantee the price, quality or availability of any of the products mentioned on this page.



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Gowrings Mobility Ltd 3 Arnhem Road, Newbury, Berkshire RG14 5RU. Tel: 01635 529500. Fax: 01635 529400



• What's on

Disability Action will hold *Mobility 2000*, 2-3 June, Belfast. This is Northern Ireland's largest exhibition of the kind, and it includes mobility services, transport solutions, and home/personal equipment. For full details, contact Mobility 2000, Disability Action, 2 Annadale Avenue, Belfast BT7 3JH, tel: 028 90 491011, textphone: 028 90 645779.

Ride for Health The British Medical Association is co-ordinating *Ride for Health*, part of the celebrations for the opening of the National Cycle Network, 24-25 June. You are encouraged to organise a cycle event, either for fun, fundraising, health awareness or your local community. For an introductory guide that contains the official registration form, contact Ride for Health, c/o British Medical Association, BMAHouse, Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9JP, tel: 0207 383 6872.

NATIONAL CHILDREN'S BUREAU The National Children's Bureau will hold a three-day course *Parenting Positively - Enhancing Parenting Skills*, 22-24 March, 28-30 June and 4-6 October, London. The course will look at behaviour difficulties in pre-/primary school children, models of assessing behaviour, introduce cognitive behaviour therapy and teach participants how to apply it. Full details from the Conference & Events Department, National Children's Bureau, 8 Wakley Street, London EC1V 7QE, tel: 0207 843 6042.

The College of Occupational Therapists holds its annual conference, *Shaping the Future - 2000 and beyond*, 18-21 July, Keele University, Staffordshire. The conference is a useful event for discussing ideas, research and evidence-based practice. Topics this year will include community services, information technology, mental health, primary care and service development. For full details contact Concorde Services, tel: 0208 743 3106, e-mail: cot@concorde-uk.com

EXPLORING HORIZONS The Chartered Society of Physiotherapists will hold its congress and exhibition, 20-22 October, Birmingham. There will be exhibitors and presentations on the latest research. Areas covered include reflex therapy, pain, occupational health and sports medicine. For full details, tel: 0207 306 6621/2, e-mail: durhams@csphysio.org.uk

• Information

MS The Multiple Sclerosis Telephone Counselling Service has a new telephone number: 0208 422 2144 (open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year), giving counselling to those with MS, or to carers. Call and you will be given the name and number of the counsellor on duty.

Whichdoctor is a new website that enables you to find a doctor who specialises in a particular area or field. Doctors have to declare their certificates and qualifications before registering and access is free. So if you have a particular requirement, take a look at www.which-doctor.co.uk

- This is not a referral service. You must consult your GP first.

SCOPE Scope's Research and Public Policy Department have published a range of Disability Issues sheets. Topics include

CROSSWORD ANSWERS

ACROSS: 1. Spina bifida 8. Edo 9. Blameless 10. Ixion 11. Acetic 12. Settler 13. Instant 16. Jaw 16. Heart 17. Elbow grease 19. Spent 20. Incline 21. Roadhog 22. Rehab
DOWN: 1. Submarine 2. Inane 3. America 4. Ibex 5. Insist 6. Aerial 7. Countrywide 12. Starring 14. Sable 15. Cancer 16. Jewish 18. Watch 19. Sir

Get independent in Manchester

Independent Living, North-West Bowlers Conference Centre, Manchester

seminars to attend. Subjects include occupational therapy, moving and handling, benefits and employment issues.

As if that's not enough, you'll also find *Looking Good, Feeling Good*



Roamin' around: there's something for everyone to see or do at the show

2000 presented by Disabled Living. This has a children's area, fashions shows, music, dance and drama, and sports and technology.

For your free ticket, tel: 01275 836465. Courtesy buses run from

Old Trafford Metro to the show every half hour 9.30am-12.00pm, and return every half hour 3pm-4.30pm. If you need transport help to attend, call Disabled Living, tel: 0161 832 3678.

The show is open Thursday 23 March, 10am-5.30pm, Friday 24 March, 10am-5pm, Saturday 25 March, 10am-4pm. Full details on the website at: www.independentlivingevents.co.uk



Try before you buy: visitors get helpful advice

Please send events information well in advance, as we work at least one month ahead due to print deadlines. DN cannot promise inclusion in this section.

• Publications

Mind Mind, the mental health charity, have published *Managing your Finances*, which details the rights of people with mental health problems to look after their own financial concerns. It looks at people's capability, how to challenge decisions about it, and appointing someone to act for you. £1 (plus 38p A5 SAE), tel: 0208 221 9666, e-mail: publications@mind.org.uk



The National Information Forum, which promotes the need to make information accessible, has reduced the price of its training pack *How to Provide Information Well*. £25 (inc. p&p) for statutory organisations, £17.50 (inc. p&p) for voluntary organisations. Contact NIF, PP10/11, BT Burne House, Bell Street, London NW1 5BZ, tel: 020 7402 6681.

Living Options

Formerly The Crypt Foundation

creating opportunities -

choice -

with and for young disabled people

* * * * *

If you are over 18 phone us to find out more about:

- * Living near the sea, with access to shops, pubs, cinemas.
- * Transport to college, clubs, concerts.....and much more.

Call Gillian Purvis,
tel/fax: 01243 671865



West Midlands Arts have produced *Right Of Way*, the new Arts and Disability Action Plan 1999-2002. It gives an overview of their work and outlines their policy on arts and disability, plus their support to other organisations, agencies and disabled artists. For a copy, tel: 0121 624 3200, minicom: 0121 643 2815.

DisabilityNOW lineage

tel: 0207 619 7320, fax: 0207 619 7331,
minicom: 0207 619 7332,
e-mail: patrick.durham_matthews@scope.org.uk

• Help

SEEKING RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS: I am a researcher seeking to interview physically disabled women who, like myself, have previously been subjected to domestic abuse. Confidentiality for all participants will be a priority. Research details available from Pauline Magowan via confidential contact points. E-mail: paulimag@aol.com, tel: 0115 854 7996 or 07971 516 594 (mobile).

ARE YOU OR your partner disabled? Do you use a vibrator? Whatever your experience, TV researcher would love to talk to you. Contact Ali, tel: 01222 590120 or e-mail: akedge@htv-wales.co.uk

POSITIVE-EMPLOYMENT: KIERAN Wright has advertised looking for disabled people to answer a questionnaire with regard to employment. Unfortunately, only 36 people have come forward to date and I need at least 100 people to answer my feasibility study. Wherever you are, if you're disabled, answering a questionnaire could benefit you and other disabled people getting work. For a questionnaire, call Kieran, tel: 01628 478995, or e-mail him at: Kieran@positive-employment.co.uk

• Personal

INTELLIGENT, ROMANTIC, GRADUATE male, slightly disabled. Half Albert Einstein, half Mickey Mouse (not looks). Young 40, wltn female 30+. Anywhere. Box No. 016

HAPPY HONEST, SINGLE male, CAB advisor. I'm 33, 5ft 10in and have short brown hair and partial vision. Easygoing, caring person with two lovely children aged 10 and 11. I am very independent and enjoy music, cinema, cooking, videos, reading, computers, dining out and socialising. I am looking for a good friendship with a caring lady with a view to a possible relationship. Box No. 017

SINGLE MALE, 43, n/s, 5ft 10in tall, slim build, diabetic with good appearance wishes to meet a lady to share and life interests. Bristol and South West please. Box No. 018

A LADY, 47, with cp, can walk with walker - sometimes a wheelchair user - wltn a genuine gentleman, aged 45-52, who is caring and kind. I am an active horse-rider and my other hobbies are wheelchair-line dancing, dining out and theatre. I also love cats, dogs and horses. All letters will be replied to. Box No. 019

SINGLE, 45-YEAR OLD, tall male, own home, n/s, gsoh, enjoys cinema, travel, theatre, music and most things. Resides in N. Ireland and seeks female from any area for friendship. Box No. 020

37-YEAR-OLD female, with mild disability, longs to meet male, aged 18-35, who plays football for a disabled football team. Box No. 021

FEMALE, ENJOYS EATING out, keeping fit and travel. Seeks male, aged 30-40, with similar interests for friendship or more. I am a professional and have own house and car. Nature of disability is unimportant. Box No. 022

HI, I'M JAYNE, 35 years old. I have mobility/speech problems due to a riding accident. I like socialising, working out and TV soaps. I would love to hear from a male of similar age and interests. Box No. 023

LADY OF 2000, with cp, wltn nice, caring man friend for friendship and maybe more in London area. Box No. 024

SOLVENT, DISABLED MALE, 42, likes rock 'n roll, pubs, clubs, football, dining out, home life and having fun. Would like a female partner - local person (Bradford). Box No. 025

MY NAME IS KEITH, I had a severe cerebral vascular accident, but have now recovered. I would like to hear from anyone interested in getting better through nutrition. I would like to help. Box No. 026

• Cars/vans

CITROEN BERLINGO MUTISPACE 1.8i

S reg, 13.5k miles, Dante red, Brotherwood conversion, wheelchair passenger ramp access, pas, air conditioning, remote locking, excellent condition, 1 owner. £13,000 ono. Contact Ian, tel: 01530 242015 (Leics).

NISSAN CRUISER, N REG, 2.5 diesel, fully adapted, 1 owner, very low mileage, vgc, fsh, 5 seats. £6,750 ono. Tel: 01604 830524.

FIAT FIORINO 1.7D, 1996, N reg. Wheelchair accessible, lightweight ramps, full harness, full service received. Vgc, average mileage. £4,650 ono. Tel: 0114 248 8482.

CHAIRMAN VAUXHALL COMBO Merit, 1.4, R reg, 3,900 miles, red. Includes back seat hydraulic lowering system. Cost £17,000, accept £14,000. No offers. Tel: 01268 695916. (Mr Evans, after 6pm).

FIAT FIORINO, 1995, 30k miles, wheelchair access plus 3 seats. Taxed and tested. £4,000 ono, will exchange for small town car. Tel: 0191 454 6310.

DAIHATSU HIJET MPV, P reg, 3 seats, wheelchair ramp, electric winch with fastenings. 3k miles only. Excellent condition, as new £5,250. Call David, tel: 01252 342444 (office), 01483 475475 (home).

CHAIRMAN FIESTA 1995, M reg, 13k miles, navy blue, fsh, MOT and taxed. Professional conversion, 4 seats plus full ramp and fittings for wheelchair. 1 previous owner, immaculate condition. £7,000. Tel: 0181 797 1602.

180 DEGREE SWIVEL seat for passenger, fits Fiat Uno. £50. Tel: 01202 700736.

NISSAN PRAIRIE 2.0 SLX, 1992 manual, 61k miles, blue, Brotherwood conversion for wheelchair, infill seat. Tax/MOT June. £11,000 ono. Tel: 01276 471077.

NISSAN VERSA PLUS, blue, 2 litre, diesel, J reg, 47k miles, wheelchair + 5 seats. Fitted Clearvu ramp, good condition. £2,500. Tel: 0161 682 7950.

RENAULT TRAFIC, N REG, 28,900 miles, pas, ramp, carries 2 wheelchairs and 4 passengers. One year MOT, vgc. £7,000 ono. Tel: 01704 544940 (Merseyside).

TOYOTA HI-ACE, K REG, Seats 5 passengers and 1 wheelchair. Tail lift, 1 owner, 47k miles, good condition. £3,000 ono. Tel: 0115 932 6886.

HONDA CONCERTO 1.5i, automatic, 1994, hatchback. 40k miles, one owner, fsh, hand controls, fully adjustable electric seats. £4,195. Tel: 01642 724437 (N. Yorks).

ELAP ROTATING SEAT for Rover Metro, only used 12 times. £300. Tel: 01579 362704 (Cornwall).

FIAT FIORINO 1.4, N reg, red, 24k miles, MOT Nov' 2000. 4 seats, ramp, electric winch. Excellent condition. £5,800 ono. Tel: 0115 925 1030.

CHAIRMAN CARGO, 2.3 diesel, N reg, 21k miles, MOT February 2001. Power steering, winch and inertia belts. £8,500. Tel: 01993 774711.

NISSAN SERENA, N REG, Brotherwood conversion, 23k miles. Immaculate condition. £12,995 ono. Tel: 01279 507200 (Bishop's Stortford).

• Caravans

SPRITE MUSKETEER 450EK Caravan, March '96, luscious specification, with new Carver caravan mover. Spacious, wide wheelchair door. Excellent condition and regularly serviced. Every extra, reluctant sale. £6,750 ono. Tel: 01704 228484 (Lancs).

• Wheelchairs/scooters

BROOK MINI TRAVELLER scooter, bought end 1999, used twice, cost £790, sell for £700 ono. Tel: 01980 620470.

STORM XC POWER wheelchair, twice used, only eight months old. Rider and attendant control facility, multi-terrain, built for robust person. Includes ramps. Cost over £5,000, will accept £3,000 for quick sale. Tel: 01277 657189 (Essex).

CHALLENGER RASCAL ELECTRIC wheelchair, indoor/outdoor, very manoeuvrable, with electric seat lift. As new, cost £2,680, will accept £1,000 ono. Tel: 0181 883 3735.

ORTHOKINETIC TRAVEL WHEELCHAIR with accessories. Suit 6-12 years, 3 height positions. When folded sits on front car seat with child in. Cost £900, accept £275. Tel: 01442 259085.

ELECTRIC INDOOR/OUTDOOR chair, was £2,250, offers below £500. Tel: 0181 551 4786.

SCANDINAVIAN MOBILITY SPECTRA powerchair and charger, 1999 model. Never used. £2,000 ono. Tel: 01764 655262.

STANNAH POWERCHAIR AND charger, 1999 model. Excellent condition. £1,995 ono. Tel: 01764 655262 (Cleiff).

STERLING 3-WHEEL ELECTRIC scooter, excellent condition. £750. Tel: 01732 357872 (Tonbridge, Kent).

SUNRISE F50S POWERCHAIR, 18in seat, hardly been used. Offers. Tel: 0181 653 8891 (South Norwood).

DOHERTY CQR FIRTH chair, one owner, buff pvc cover. Easy to push. Alzheimer/muscular loss. Good as new. £600. Tel: 01865 751318.

• Household/family

ADJUSTAMATIC BED WITH massage unit, headboard, full 5 year guarantee, never been used. Cost £3,775, accept £2,000 ono. Buyer collects. Tel: 01246 271750, e-mail: matthew_horrobin@email.msn.com

MEDICBATH XP MODEL with shower unit and thermostatic controls. Used only once, cost £2,000, will accept £1,000. Tel: 0115 974 8143.

MINIVATOR STAIRLIFT, AS NEW, 4m straight track. Manufacturer's lateral transfer platform. 10 stairs up left side, then 3 wind right. See it working in Luton. Qualified installation available. £1,000. Tel: 01932 221153.

ELECTRIC REMOTE CONTROL adjustable bed with built-in massager/vibrator. New condition. Cost £3,500, will accept £1,250. Tel: 01243 603643.

STANNAH STAIRLIFT, CURVE at bottom, left hand side. Recent model. £900 ono. Tel: 01785 662017 (evenings).

KIRTON CHAIR, SUIT 5-11 years. Handrest, footrest, tray cushion, groin harness. Adjustable angle, new condition. Cost £575, accept £225. Tel: 01442 259085.

STANNAH HOME WHEELCHAIR two person lift. New, vgc, can be seen working. Cost £14,000. Offers. Tel: 0181 393 8306.

STRAIGHT STAIRLIFT, NEVER used. £900. Tel: 01260 252717 (after 6pm).

• Wanted

CARTER'S LARGE FRONTWHEEL drive wheelchair spares wanted: 16in back canvas and seat, and 6in diameter tyres. NHS no longer able to supply. Tel: 0181 748 1186 (answerphone).

• Tricycles

CYCLONE TRACKER HANDCYCLE, suitable for folding wheelchair, hardly used. £800 ono. Tel: 01203 351112.

• Accommodation

DETACHED 4 BEDROOM HOUSE

in Dereham, Norfolk with a passenger lift suitable for wheelchairs. Near the town centre and shops. Offers in excess of £135,000. Tel: (01362) 694047.

LARGE GROUND FLOOR flat, 2 beds, electric ceiling hoist, rise/fall bath ramps, wide doors, etc. Gch, fitted kitchen, garage and off street parking. Very close to beach and shops. £82,000 ono. Broadstairs, Kent. Tel: 01843 600826.

PURPOSE BUILT, DETACHED

2-bedroom bungalow for independent wheelchair living, in rural area, 1 mile from Ashbourne, Derbyshire. Enquiries most welcome. £87,500. Tel: 01335 300242 (Turpin).

• Combined adverts

BAKARE VOLKER 2030E

fully adjustable bed, £1,100. Kingcraft Easibath Hi-Lift model 2100, £1,750. ARJO Trixie Lift mobile hoist, £1,250. Laerdal Premier Portable Suction Unit, £350. BCI hand held Pulse Oximeter, £250. All above are items and equipment in excellent condition. Tel: 01234 772369 (Bedford)

ALPHAXCELL PRESSURE MATTRESS and pump, £400. 4m Chiltern ceiling hoisting system, £800. 3m Chiltern hoisting system, £600. Lifting and toileting slings, £30 each. Tel: 01226 211472 (Barnsley).

ELECTRIC DUNLOPILLO SINGLE East 5 bed, wrapped, never used, save £450, £745. Also, Barratt chrome wheelchair £200, used once, cost £430. Tel: 01203 679165 or 01484 544451.

Conditions

Disability Now maintains the right to amend or withdraw lineage adverts without prior notice. All adverts must comply with the British Code of Advertising Practice.

Telephone numbers and addresses will not be placed in personal adverts, instead Box Numbers will be provided. Box Numbers cannot be used for the sale of documents or goods.

Lineage adverts can only be used by private individuals. All commercial enquiries must be addressed to the Advertising Manager (see imprint on page 2).

DN cannot accept responsibility for loss or damage of adverts or letters during forwarding.

Lineage styles

EXAMPLE OF standard lineage advert. Cost: £5.50 per line. Tick box below.

EXAMPLE OF semi-display lineage advert. Cost: £5.50 per line plus £10. Tick box below.

EXAMPLE OF box lineage advert. Cost: £5.50 per line plus £20. Tick box below.

- Standard lineage advert
- Semi-display lineage advert
- Box lineage advert

Please use this form if you are a private individual and want to place a classified advertisement (not Personal adverts). Write clearly in block capitals. Remember to allow a space between words. Use each space in the line even if you have to split words at the end.

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Reconditioned stairlifts
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Guaranteed.

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convenient swivel seat, joystick
for easy operation. Complete
with DC power. Cost £1,650 a
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2000

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the April issue:
Booking deadline is
10 March
Copy deadline is
14 March

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at the address/
phone number
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send a cheque or
postal order for £6
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Fiat Fiorino 1.7 diesel, 1999 "V",
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Ford Courier 1.3, 1999 "T",
6k miles, low floor - £9,750

Fiat Fiorino 1994 "M" - £4,250

Nissan Vanette 2.0 diesel, 1994 "M",
Ricon lift, 5 seats and

wheelchair, only 28k miles - £6,650

Part exchange considered TRADE

PRE-OWNED & DEMONSTRATOR WAV'S FOR SALE

WW Sharan 2.0, petrol, 1995 N, metallic blue. New lowered floor, WAV conversion £14,995

WW Sharan 1.9, turbo diesel, 1996 P, metallic green 16k miles. Lowered floor conversion £15,995

Mercedes Vito 2.3, diesel, 1998 R, turquoise, 17k miles. Wheelchair pass' sits alongside driver. Lowered rear floor access, Portaramp, 2M1 tested tip up forward facing rear seats. Many extras £16,950

Renault Extra 1.9, diesel, 1997 R, 20k miles, white. Lowered floor, lightweight vision style ramp, new conversion £8,695

Ford Courier 1.3, petrol, 1992 K, white. Gowrings WAV conversion with lowering suspension £4,995

Skoda Cube 1.6, petrol, 1999 T, delivery miles only, white. New conversion including lowered floor, lightweight vision style ramp. Big saving on new price at £12,995

Citroen Berlingo 1.9, diesel, 1997 P, pas, white. Lowered floor, lightweight vision style ramp. New £11,895

conversion £14,299

Fiat Scudo 1.9, diesel, 1998 S, white. New lowered floor conversion with lightweight vision style ramp £12,995

Renault Kangoo 1.8, diesel, 1998 R, white. New lowered floor conversion £12,995

VW Caravelle 2.4, diesel, 1997 P, metallic blue. WAV with Ricon rear mounted lift £11,995

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It carries sample news and features from the current issue, an archive of all news and features from Jan 97 to November 99, and over 300 links to other useful sites. Our jobs page is growing rapidly because advertisers know they can reach their target audience.

If you want a second opinion, check out what some of our browsers feel about it (names are abbreviated for confidentiality).

• I'd like to congratulate you on your superb website. I use it regularly to keep in touch with the latest job vacancies and I enjoy reading your features immensely! - K.R.

• We used to subscribe but ran out of spare cash. Then we found your website while looking for addresses to send a letter to. Now we just keep coming back. - T.H., Isle of Wight

• It's great to be able to talk to you and let you know that I really appreciate all the hard work that has been done already to create news and information for people with disabilities and those who are seeking to discover more. - P.Q., Kingston-upon-Hull

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adam.price@lineone.net



• Courses

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS**School of Sociology and Social Policy
Diploma/MA in Disability Studies**

This unique and hugely popular programme of study gives students the opportunity to work for either a Post Graduate Diploma in Disability Studies or the Degree of Master of Arts (MA) in Disability Studies. The scheme covers both the theoretical and practical issues relevant to disablement and the disability experience. It is designed for people working in, or planning a career in, the general area of disability related services.

Candidates will normally have a first degree or equivalent professional qualification, but relevant experience will be taken into account where appropriate. This course is taught in an accessible location and the University welcomes disabled students.

This Post Graduate Diploma/MA in Disability Studies programme is also available as an open distance learning package.

For further details please contact Marie Ross or Debbie Westmoreland in the Department of Sociology and Social Policy at the University of Leeds, LS2 9JT.

Tel/Minicom: 0113 233 4418 or 0113 233 4408.

Holidays (also on pages 35-38)**West Coast Argyll**

Just completed superb conversion, very spacious old farm house overlooking sea. Sleeps 8+4. Aim STB 4/5* ground floor category 1. Twin room ensuite wheelchair in shower with seat. Aga, low ceramic hob and kitchen designed to suit disabled and able bodied guests. Games room, 2 log fires, oil oh, linen, carpet for dry transfers. Conservatory with stunning views over garden, sea and islands. Upstairs 4 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms. 3,000 acres coastal estate with beautiful gardens and some wheelchair accessible walks. Hill walking, wildlife, loch fishing, tennis, boats (hire), or just relaxing, 12 miles Oban. Details Struthers Ardnamaddy Castle tel/fax: 01852 300353

Dordogne - SW France

on the outskirts of a village in the
beautiful Forêt de la Double.
Converted cottage for disabled
guests and their families. Sleeps 8.

Telex/Fax: Clive on 01492 871433
e-mail: clive@great-orme.freescrve.co.uk

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Holiday Cottages**

3 self-catering, all wheelchair accessible, 1 with
wheel-in shower room, 2 with airbaths. Mostly
en-suite. On working farm - peaceful location,
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Indoor heated swimming pool now being built.

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Rosemary on 01760 338797.

**4-star holiday home to let in
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Ramped entrance, bathroom with compact
floor and accessible shower. pet rats welcome.
E-mail: nycom@gomeo.indigo.ie
Tel: 00 35 36 371206

Beautiful West Dorset

Luxury ground floor flat near Lyme Regis. Sleeps
4 (or 4 and baby). Cat. 2 National Accessible
Scheme, 3 keys highly commended by ETB.
Situated on 5 star holiday park with shop and
recreational facilities. Telephone:
Wood Farm Caravan Park 01297 560431

The Algarve, Portugal. Small hotel owned and
run by English family. Home from home, small &
friendly, all home cooked food, diets catered for.
All bedrooms ensuite. Our own swimming pool
and bowling centre. For brochure and flights
with ATOL agents, tel: 01235 521804

**DN's website
adverts**

Gleneagles

Holidays

WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE HOLIDAY COTTAGE IN RURAL FRANCE

Charming cottage in Dordogne region available for rent. Reasonable rates. If you are looking for peace and quiet, warm weather, good food and wine, this is the place for you. Book now for 2000. Call or fax Ed Passant on 0181 885 4971 or e-mail: ed.passant@ipix.com

CENTRAL BRITTANY FARMHOUSES

with excellent ground floor facilities for wheelchair users. Resident English owner. For brochure contact Peter Davies, 94 Church Road, Stretton, Burton upon Trent DE13 0HE. Tel: (01283) 543743

Late bookings accepted

The Pines, Bishop's Castle

offers self-catering holiday accommodation in an attractive and recently refurbished, specially adapted house in the south Shropshire countryside. The accommodation is suitable for families and groups of up to 24 people. The nightly charges are £12 per person for groups of 1-9 £10 per person for groups of 10-15 £8 per person for 15+ For further information telephone (01588) 638234.

NAISH HOLIDAY VILLAGE: Excellent site in the "good" status. New modern campsite. Excellent site facilities with 100 pitches and a modern toilet block. Restaurant and bar. Open two periods. All accessible by wheelchair. Good recommended. Sleeps 6. Well furnished. Free club membership.

GRANGE COURT HOLIDAY VILLAGE: Park with "good" status, Grangeon Sands, Devon. Excellent site facilities within short walk, with indoor and outdoor pools, restaurant, bar, take away. Fully equipped, 2 bedroom, fully wheelchair accessible mobile home. Sleeps 4-6, well maintained. Free club membership. (Purchased with funds from the National Lottery).

MILDENREATH HOLIDAY VILLAGE: Excellent seaside site with good facilities, just outside Looe in Cornwall. Restaurant, clubhouse, indoor pool. Fully equipped and wheelchair accessible 2 bedroom chalet accommodation. Sleeps 6 - well furnished and comfortable. Free club membership.

Details: Mr P Cash, tel: (01425) 672055 Bournemouth Spina Bifida Association. Registered Charity No. 261914.

Brittany Cottage to let. Fully adapted for wheelchair use. Good access to beaches. Sleeps up to 6. Details **C. Hodgson.** Tel (01924) 499220.

JUBILEE LODGE – Essex Purpose built holiday centre, Epping Forest, Cambridge. Southend nearby. 26 single en-suite rooms, 5 twin rooms. CTV. Motorized hoists. Bar. Conservatory. Coffee lounge. Visits/entertainment included. Help buttons. Nurses/volunteer support. Social Services registered. From £270 pw. For brochure call: 0171 833 4579 ext. 132

FREEDOM OF THE GLEN HOTELS Choose from 3 hotels in spectacular lochside settings near Fort William. Enjoy the freedom to select the hotel which sets the right atmosphere for your break. A choice of 10 rooms with disabled facilities, around the loch. E-mail: reservations@freedomglen.co.uk Tel: 01855 8215821. Fax: 01855 821463 www.freedomglen.co.uk

PENROSE BURDEN NORTH CORNWALL "Holiday Care Award Winners" Holiday Cottages designed for wheelchair users and their families. Rural setting with superb views. Dogs welcome. Wood burning stoves and gas, meal service. Please ring or write for our brochure R&N Hall, Penrose Burden, St Beward, Bodmin, Cornwall PL30 4LZ. Telephone Bodmin (01208) 850277 or 850617

Skylarks – Nottingham

Purpose-built holiday centre in the Heart of England. 26 single en-suite, 5 twin rooms. Electric hoists. CTV Hydro pool. Bar. Help buttons. Free trips/excursions Nurses/volunteer support. Prices from £270 pw – including food/care. For brochure, please tel: 0171 833 4579 ext 132.

Soluis mu Thuath Guest House

Nr Achmore, Lochalsh, Wester Ross. Situated in peaceful Strath Ascaig. 5 ensuite rooms, 2 suitable for disabled guests. £25 dinner, B&B till end of March, from 1 April. £23 B&B Tel/Fax 01599 577219 e-mail: soluisbrae@rao.com www.freenetpages.co.uk/hp/soluis

Shaftesbury, Dorset. Award winning holiday cottages. cat 1, 2 and 3. Working family farm in beautiful countryside. "Best views in Dorset", tremendous character, log fires, C.H. old beams. Accessible swimming, some aids and support services available. Colour brochure Mrs Sue Smart, Hartgrove Farm, Hartgrove, Shaftesbury, Dorset SP7 0JY, tel: 01747 811830, fax: 01747 811066, e-mail: cottages@hartgrove.demon.co.uk

• Recruitment (on pages 36-38)

KENT INFORMATION FEDERATION

wishes to appoint a
MANAGER

Salary: £17,500 - £18,500 plus car.

Starting salary will depend on experience and skills. Based in Gravesend, but involving extensive travel in Kent. KIF provides a free, confidential and independent information service for disabled people, carers and others acting on their behalf.

Requirements for the post are general management experience and an understanding of current issues facing disabled people and carers.

Closing date for applications: 10 May 2000

For an application pack please contact KIF at Ground Floor, Cygnet House, 132 Windmill Street, Gravesend, Kent DA12 1BQ.

Tel: 01474 534777

Minicom: 01474 322177.



Visual Basic Programmer

Salary: Negotiable dependant on experience

We are looking for a bright and enthusiastic individual with 1-2 years solid experience of VB 5/6 to work closely with our Technical Co-ordinator on a unique and innovative CAD-based project. Firsthand knowledge of taking an application through its entire lifecycle is essential, as well as an ability to follow a well-defined software development process. Knowledge of any of the following would be an advantage. Windows 95/98/NT, C/C++, DLL's, ActiveX and Client-Server and database development.

Location: Nottingham, Bradford or home-based with regular contact. Contract: 2 years, full-time, immediate start.

For more information and an informal chat call Dr Chris Jolley on 01274 420493.

awear

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CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Disability Initiative

£30,000 - £35,000pa

We are a non-profit making registered charity providing services for disabled people within a 15 mile radius of Camberley, covering Surrey, Berkshire and Hampshire. This year we will move into our own new resource centre on a prime site in Camberley which will add to the exciting opportunities for the development of the charity.

As CE your prime focus will be to work closely with local disabled people, statutory services, business organisations and the community to take the charity into the 21st century. You will be highly motivated, creative and enthusiastic. Ideally you will have a successful record of project management, negotiation and leadership either within a charity, a business or a statutory service.

Please write or phone for further information to: Jill Aylott, Chief Executive, Disability Initiative, Suite C, Rossmore House, 26-42 Park Street, Camberley, Surrey GU15 3PL. Tel: 01276 676302.

The closing date is: 24 March.

Disability Initiative is an equal opportunities employer and a disability will be considered an additional but not essential qualification.

• Holidays (on pages 35-38)

Devon – Dartmoor National Park

Wheelchair friendly farm, self catering, lovely location, well equipped. Ground floor, sleep 2-6.

Tel: 01364 631421

Seafront Apartments In The Sun

Lovely resort on Spain's Orange Blossom Coast. 2 bedrooms, wheel-in showers & chair, easy access to seafront, shops, restaurants and bars. Accessible transfers and excursions.

tel: 01452 740820

e-mail: info@travelability.demon.co.uk

Wheelchair friendly mobile home near the beautiful south coast of Brittany. Sleeps 6. Microwave, tv, video. Sundock on site, swimming pool, bar, disabled toilet, shower facilities. Phone Janeene on 01983 289577 for further details.

Crabhill House – SURREY

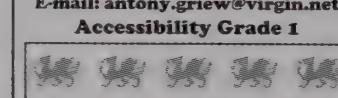
Fully accessible country house – with purpose-built extension. 26 single en-suite rooms. 5 twin rooms. Licensed bar. CTV. Conservatory. Lovely gardens. Electric hoists. Help buttons. Nurses/volunteer support. Day trips to Brighton, London, Theatreland etc. From £270 pw – food/personal support included. For information/booking form tel: 0171-833 4579 ext 132.

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Accessibility Grade 1



PROJECT MANAGER

"ATTITUDE IS EVERYTHING" VENUE ACCESS CHARTER



London's information & advice service for disabled people on arts & entertainment

ARTSLINE, London's information and advice service for all disabled people on arts and entertainment wishes to appoint a Project Manager to implement an access charter promoting best practice for venues involved in the grass roots live music scene in England.

You will have demonstrable experience in project management, have broad fundraising and media liaison skills, and be aware of current issues and legislation in this field.

3 days per week. Initial contract June 2000-September 2001. Salary £13,262.

For further information and an application form please contact Roger Robinson, Director, Artsline, 54 Chalton Street, London NW1 1HS 020 7388 2460.

Deadline for applications : Friday 31st March, 2000.
Artsline is an Equal Opportunities Employer.

See the person

Action and Rights of Disabled People in Newham

require a Locum Development Worker for 3 months for their Newham Independent Living Scheme

Salary grade: SO2.32 + 15% (£6,332), Hours: 36

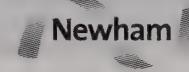
A resourceful and imaginative disabled person with experience and knowledge of developing and administering projects is required to further develop and maintain Newham's Independent Living Scheme.

You will need detailed knowledge of independent living issues, a strong commitment to the empowerment of disabled people and be able to work on your own initiative.

Closing date for applications: Friday 24 March 2000

For an application form please write including a SAE to:

Liza Kelleher
Action and Rights of Disabled People in Newham
c/o Community Links
105 Barking Road
Canning Town
E16 4HQ
Tel: 0171 473 2270 (voice/minicom), Fax: 0171 473 6671



Funded by London Borough of Newham

Job Opportunities in an environment second to none

Northumberland is England's Border County, rich in scenic beauty and heritage. The population, just over 300,000, is located mainly in the urban south-east and then throughout many rural communities stretching across nearly 2,000 square miles to Scotland and Cumbria.

We are the largest employer in the county and offer a diverse range of job opportunities. It is an exciting time to join local government as we embark upon a major programme of modernisation and change.

As a Disability Symbol User, we will guarantee an interview to any disabled applicant who meets the essential criteria for the job. Details of our vacancies are available in Job Centres on a weekly basis.

We are particularly keen to encourage applications from people with disabilities and offer support and assistance to any disabled applicant in making an application in different media eg Braille, large print, tape etc and we are willing to explore reasonable adjustments.

For further information contact John Stenhouse on (01670) 533709 or JStenhouse@northumberland.gov.uk or Minicom (01670) 533733.

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

ACTION FOR EQUALITY -

We welcome applications from people with disabilities who will be granted an interview if the essential job criteria are met.

Newlands Guest House, Reydon Southwold, Suffolk IP18 6NR

New for 2000 - purpose built wheelchair accessible suites. All rooms en-suite, tv, evening meals by arrangement. Ample carparking, large garden. For details tel: 01502 722164, fax: 01502 724696 www.southwold.blythweb.co.uk/newlands



CAREFREE HOLIDAYS IN FRANCE & SPAIN

Summers in France, winters in Spain Time to relax and forget about rain Fully wheelchair accessible accommodation Minibus for transfers and daily excursions Good home cooking and complementary wine with meals For brochure on French & Spanish holidays call 0181 205 6778

Sandpipers – SOUTHPORT Overlooks Southport's Marine lake/ beaches. Trips to the Lake District, Blackpool, Alton Towers. Accessible holiday centre. 12 single rooms, 12 twin rooms. Help buttons. Indoor swimming pool. CTV. Bar. From £270 pw – full personal support/volunteer help included. Registered with Social Services. Most physical disabilities catered for. Brochure? Call: 0171-833 4579 ext 132.

• Recruitment (on pages 36-38)



Spot the difference

The difference is, Barnardo's is giving **everyone** a chance in the job market.

When it comes to finding the right person for a job - or the right job for a person - we've made a commitment: to interview every single applicant who is disabled, as long as they meet the essential selection criteria. So, whether it's telephone fundraising or canvassing, HR or finance, IT systems or retail or working directly with children and young people - all these functions serve Britain's largest children's charity and are essential to make a practical difference to the lives of children or young people and their families.

The Barnardo's "Basis and Values" statement complements our Equal Opportunities policy and commits us to increasing the number of staff and volunteers who are disabled. So, if you see a Barnardo's post you're interested in, don't hesitate for a second. Alternatively contact our job information line on Tel: 020 8498 7009 (24 hour answerphone) or Minicom: 020 8498 7079 quoting Ref: DN3.



THE PRINCE'S TRUST

Area Chairpersons in the Business Division

Support and Leadership in the Local Community

At the Prince's Trust our aim is clear: to help young people to succeed. Targeting those who need us most, we deliver training, help to set them up in business and provide tailor-made opportunities to individuals and groups.

The Trust's Business Division now wishes to meet high calibre individuals who can readily identify with the needs of a range of client groups and minority communities in Bristol, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Dorset and Hertfordshire in order to appoint new Chairpersons to the Volunteer Boards in these Areas.

You will have earned a high profile in business and/or the community. You will be capable of retaining, recruiting and leading a fully representative group of volunteers in the decision making process of helping young people translate good ideas into sound businesses. You will relish the prospect of committing some of your own time and your business acumen into creating positive and exciting opportunities for young people.

This is a unique opportunity to put something back into local communities. To contribute something of lasting value. To make a real difference.

Don't miss it. Find out what you can achieve by sending your C.V. to Helen Porteous at Scott Edgar Response, Paragon House, London EC1M 3PH. Closing date: 6th March 2000.

The Prince's Trust values diversity and welcomes applications from all sections of the community



Applications are restricted to disabled people. GLAD's offices are fully accessible. A job pack for this post is available in print, large print, audio tape and on disk from:

The Admin & Finance Dept
GLAD
336 Brixton Road
London SW9 7AA
tel: 0171 346 5800
m'com: 0171 346 5811
fax: 0171 346 5810
e-mail: glad@btinternet.com

Closing date:
5pm Wednesday 22 March.
Interviews will take place week beginning 10 April.

Greater London Action on Disability (GLAD)

wishes to appoint a disabled person as our

Director

Salary: £30,480 (inc. London weighting)

GLAD campaigns for the rights of disabled Londoners. We want a Director who will manage, develop and promote GLAD as the leading organisation of disabled people, at a time when London faces exciting changes and new challenges.

You will need experience of managing a diverse staff team; a thorough understanding of disability issues and the social model of disability; proven fundraising experience; an ability to work with a range of agencies, including consulting GLAD's membership and representing GLAD's views in an accessible way; and have a commitment to delivering high quality and inclusive services.

GLAD is a registered charity no. 293158
GLAD is an equal opportunities employer.



This organisation is funded by London Boroughs Grants

West of England Centre for Integrated Living

seeks a Disabled person as

Advocacy Development Co-ordinator

WECIL requires a Disabled person for the above post based in Bristol, to further develop the range of innovative and supportive advocacy services for Disabled people provided by WECIL.

The postholder would oversee and manage the existing Care Management and Disabled Mothers' Peer Advocacy Projects.

This is a challenging post with good career prospects working in a supportive team of Disabled people.

Closing date: Friday 24 March 2000.

WECIL particularly encourages applications from under-represented groups (eg Black Disabled people, Disabled Lesbians and Gay Men).

• Holidays (on pages 35-38)

Near Salisbury - newly converted stable block self-catering units. Ground floor 1 double/twin bedroom en-suite wheel-in shower. Upstairs 1 double, 1 single. Open plan kitchen & living room. Patio & shared garden. Aiming for Cat. 2 ETB. Non-smoking. Prices from £195 pw. Available all year. Opens Dec' 1999. **01722 328954**

LINDETH HOWE COUNTRY HOUSE HOTEL
Set in six acres of beautiful grounds overlooking Lake Windermere. Recently re-opened after major extension & redevelopment. Indoor Swimming Pool • Two Lounges • Cosy Bar One new ground floor bedrooms are wheelchair accessible & have disabled facilities. New colour brochure 015394 45759 email: lindeth.howe@kencomp.net

LLETY MIERI LLANDEILO, WEST WALES
3 charming award-winning cottages, designed for wheelchair users and their families. Peaceful rural location overlooked by Dinefwr Castle. Each warm and well equipped cottage sleeps 4. Extensive grounds and games room. Open all year. Short breaks available. Tel: Catherine McLoughlin (01558 823 059) for brochure.



5 Star self catering cottages on animal park in North Wales. Fully wheelchair accessible with all services for disabled people, 2 miles from the beach. Three quarters hour drive from Snowdonia National Park. 01407 711433.

NORTH CUMBRIA

Cozy well equipped lakeside lodges (2 b'room). Idyllic, peaceful & wonderful nature. Wheelchair friendly lodge and walks around lake & private nature reserve. Free use of wheelchair boat. Great fly fishing.

The Tranquil Otter

01228 576661

WINGED FELLOWSHIP TRUST
New discovery holidays worldwide.
Overseas holidays for people with physical disabilities. Destinations include: Sri Lanka, Israel, Egypt, Tenerife, Spain, Paris and Jersey. Prices include flights, travel in adapted vehicles, accessible accommodation, nurse/couriers/volunteers. All destinations accessible. Brochure from Louise Keen: 0171 833 4579 ext 122.

• Services

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Are you older and/or disabled?
Do you need an extra pair of hands around the house?

We specialise in 24hr care, 365 days a year.

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- Live in companion

For a free no obligation, no commitment assessment of your needs, ring AGES on

0208 646 7649

E-mail: AGES@Communitycare.freemail.co.uk

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RADIO FOR THE PRINT IMPAIRED

Do you find it difficult or impossible to read printed material? If so would you be interested in joining the National Talking Express who are hoping to set up a radio station specifically providing every type of information that is only normally accessible through the printed newspaper or book which you may normally miss out on?

It is hoped firstly to have the radio station on the internet and if sufficient finance can be raised hopefully thereafter on satellite and/or cable.

If anyone is interested in joining the National Talking Express (NTE) there is an enrollment fee of £5 but thereafter there is no subscription except that members are asked to donate whatever they can afford to help maintain the charity's services to members.

For further information please telephone Colin Howard on 01489 574727 or e-mail dials@parispyt.demon.co.uk.

All new members are welcome to take part in our Radio for the Print Impaired survey. Please contact either in braille or on cassette to Mr P Troll, 9 Bignold Road, Forest Gate, London, E7 0EX.



• Recruitment (on pages 36-38)

Employment Support for Disabled People

The Employment Service can provide employment and job retention advice to disabled people who are facing additional employment barriers associated with their disability.

Disability Employment Advisers (DEAs) can provide:

- employment assessment
- job seeking advice and support
- information on specialist employment programmes for disabled people
- advice on remaining in work

For more information get in touch with your local Jobcentre



Employment Service

Due to successful funding applications to Comic Relief, The Baring Foundation, and the National Lottery and continued funding from Durham County Council in respect of an STG payments, Disability Outlook Forum are seeking to recruit for the following:

Resource Centre Manager (ref: RCM1)
Salary scale: 6/SO1, £17,274 - £18,546, one year

Resource Worker (ref: RCW2)
Salary scale 4-5, £12,192 - £14,766, part-time, 20hrs, one year

Project Co-ordinator (ref: PC3)
Salary scale SO1, £19,770, part-time, 20 hrs, one year

Development Worker (ref: DW4)
Salary scale 5/6, £14,766 - £16,719, part-time, 20 hrs

Assistant Co-ordinator (ref: AC5)
Durham City Shopmobility, Salary scale 4/5, £7,500, 25 hrs

For an information pack containing relevant background information, job description and person specification please contact the address below indicating the appropriate reference number.

Closing date for all applications is 10 March 2000.

Disability Outlook is an equal opportunities employer and we are particularly keen to receive applications from under-represented sections of the community.

Mr John Bowes, Chairperson, Disability Outlook, Abbey Day Centre, Abbey Road, Pity Me, County Durham DH1 5NG, tel: 0191 383 1992.



CHANGE is a small, but growing national organisation of disabled people that works for better rights, services and information for people with learning disabilities and sensory impairment. **CHANGE** wishes to appoint a deaf or disabled person to the following post:

Volunteer Co-ordinator

18.5 hours a week, Salary: £9,173 per annum.
Annual leave 25 days per annum (pro rata), London.

Required: experience of working with volunteers with learning disabilities in an empowering way; experience of setting up and facilitating training events and knowledge of services provided for people with learning disabilities.

Supported by the Adult & Community Learning Fund.

For further information and an application form please send a 39p SAE to 'Dayo Essien, CHANGE, 1st Floor, 69-85 Old Street, London EC1V 9HY. Please note that CVs are not acceptable.

Closing date: Monday 13 March 2000.

Interview date: Thursday 23 March 2000.

Are you computer literate?

Disabled ex-business man seeks a partner – must be able to take care of the administration (e-mail, typing etc) side of a new start up business project which is both exciting and profitable. Contact Ken, tel: 01994 241108, mob: 07971 394600, e-mail: kenwillow@virgin.net

• Situations wanted

VIDEOS Former TV reporter who now has MS and is a wheelchair user, seeks writing and research work. Offers Media Awareness Training and video production. Contact David, tel/fax: 01332 755520 e-mail: varowatson@callnetuk.com

• Personal

Established 1987
Thirteen year's experience to find you a partner and lucky for some! For disabled people – able bodied welcome Tel: 01473 226950 Fax: 01473 254030 E-mail: handidate@btinternet.com www.btinternet.com/~handidate Freepost, Handidate, The Wellington Centre, 52 Chevallier Street, Ipswich, Suffolk IP1 2BR A member of ABIA

Find-A-Friend
Anybody - Any Age - Anywhere Able-bodied or Disabled Choose Your Own Ideal Relationship **MUTUAL ESSENTIAL LINKS**

1 Weir Street, Northwich, Cheshire CW9 5HL
Tel/Fax: (24 hrs) UK 01606 49093 Overseas +44 + 1606 49093

• Holidays

ALGARVE - PORTUGAL
 Lots of villas, farmhouses, bungalows, hotels, B&B, car hire with hand controls, adapted vans and plenty to see and do. Contact: David Player Tel: 00 351 289 393636 Fax: 00 351 289 397448 E-mail: dave@player.pt www.player.pt

Blagdon Farm Country Holidays Devon/Cornwall border
Superb, south-facing, wheelchair accessible luxury bungalows overlooking lake and set within 38 acres of glorious countryside. Many on-site facilities including indoor heated pool. Take-away meals delivered and equipment loan available. Tourist Board Highly Commended. For colour brochure please contact: Pauline and Tony Blight, Blagdon Farm, Ashwater, Beaworthy, Devon EX21 5DF. Phone: 01409 211509. Fax 01409 211510.

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"HOLIDAY CARE AWARD WINNERS"
Quality self-catering cottages for ALL the family with an emphasis on facilities for disabled visitors. 6 of the 9 traditional Welsh stone cottages are single storey, easily accessible from the car park. Luxurious indoor heated swimming pool with hoist. Games room. Open ALL YEAR. Visit us at www.selfcateringinwales.co.uk or ring for a 2000 brochure

RICHARD & LINDA BURGESS
01570 470275

2000
Classified deadlines for the April issue:
Booking deadline is **10 March**
Copy deadline is **14 March**

Disability Now is not responsible for claims made in the advertisements it prints and all readers are advised to check claims with the advertisers before relying on them.

UPDATE

Scotland's Disability Consultancy for Information Providers

Fundraising Officer

Full-time, Edinburgh
Starting salary £19,827

Applications for this new post are restricted to people who consider themselves to be disabled.

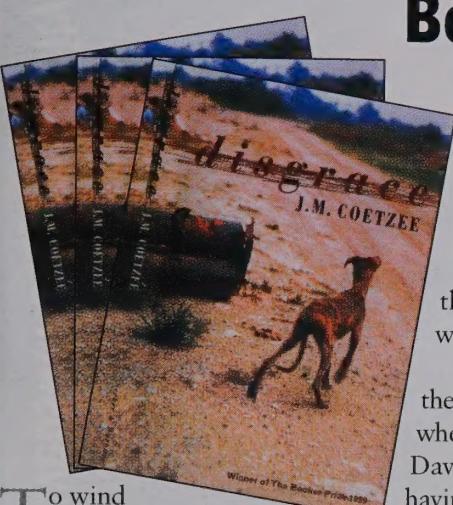
We are a national user-led organisation providing disability related information to first tier information providers in Scotland. The Fundraising Officer's main responsibility will be to devise and implement innovative strategies to raise core funds from a range of donors. Project-specific fundraising will also be a key responsibility. Hiring our accessible meeting rooms is an existing source of income, and the post holder will co-ordinate and further develop this activity.

Applicants must demonstrate a good track record of fundraising. Self-motivation and the ability to work as a member of a small team is vital.

Application packs are available in 14pt Arial, and other sizes as requested, or in Braille, or on audiotape or floppy disc. Contact Cathy Scott on 0131 558 5200, fax: 0131 558 5201, minicom: 0131 558 5202, e-mail: cathys@update.org.uk. Or write to UPDATE, 27 Beaverhall Road, Edinburgh EH7 4JE.

Closing date: Wednesday 8 March 2000.

These are the words you need to find in the wordsearch: Calvert, Trust, Keswick, Kielder, Exmoor, fun, horseride, kayak, canoe, climb, abseil, sail. Send the wordsearch with the entry form below.



Booker prize books to be won

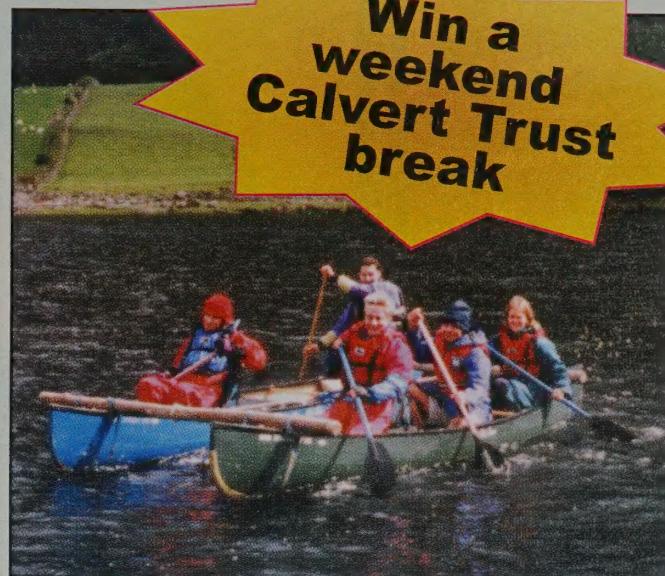
the Booker Prize 1999 winner.

Written by JM Coetzee, the book is set in South Africa, where university lecturer David Lurie is disgraced by having an affair with a student.

To recover, he escapes to his daughter's smallholding. But an attack on them exposes the frailties of their relationship.

You can also order the book using ISBN 0 43620489 4.

To wind away those Spring nights, why not settle down with a good book? Better still, with the Booker Prize recently in the news, why not win a fantastic book through us – *Disgrace*,



Win a weekend Calvert Trust break

This is your chance to win a weekend holiday for two people, fully catered with outdoor activities, at one of the Calvert Trust Centres, worth up to £320.

The Calvert Trust is a registered charity offering activity holidays and courses for people of all ages with disabilities. You can choose from three centres: Keswick, Kielder and Exmoor.

The three centres have wheelchair accessible accommodation and are either full board or self-catered. Each has a heated indoor pool and excellent facilities.

You can enjoy the surrounding National Parks, or try your hand at sailing, canoeing, climbing, abseiling, orienteering or

horse riding. The more adventurous you can try specialised activity courses such as handcycling, paragliding or river rafting.

For a chance to win this break, find the words listed top left. Offer subject to availability.

To find out more about each Calvert Trust Centre:
Keswick Centre, tel/minicom: 01768 772254
Kielder Centre, tel: 01434 250232
Exmoor Centre, tel/minicom: 01598 763221

T	K	A	Y	A	K	H	A	F	B
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A	B	S	I	C	E	I	O	N	B

Have a hydrobelt



Following on from the "fish belts" in *Special offers* (DN, November 1999), Careflex have kindly given us three Hydrobelts to give to lucky winners.

These belts are similarly designed to give extra stability for the wearer or mover. Being totally waterproof, non-absorbant and non-slip even when wet, they are ideal for

bathing, showering, swimming and hydrotherapy.

The belt is available in small (£30), medium (£35) and large (£40) sizes. Please indicate size on the entry form.

Unlucky entrants can still get information from Careflex, freephone: 0800 018 6440, fax: 01626 836441, e-mail: careflex@aol.com

TO ENTER

- Calvert Trust holiday
- Disgrace book
- Hydrotherapy belts: S M L

Tick the competitions you want to enter, add your details, and send FOR FREE to Disability Now, Freepost WD4323, London N7 9BR.

Win £100 and books in our limerick competition - see page 29

• Closing date: 31 March 2000 • Entrants must be over 18 • No proof of purchase required • UK entrants only • No cash alternatives • Winners notified by post • DN reserves the right to use winners for future publicity • Editor's decision is final • Special offers not open to DN staff or associates

TERMS & CONDITIONS

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If you receive any of the means-tested benefits listed below, then you are entitled to receive DN directly to your door every month – for FREE. Simply send us proof of your entitlement and we will set up your subscription immediately.

Alternatively, to subscribe, tick the rate you require and send with payment to our FREEPOST address (remember – no stamp required if posting in the UK). Cheques payable to Disability Now. Or call our Hotline number above and pay by credit card.



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DN3/00

New rates for 2000:

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Rest of world

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income support, housing benefit, council tax exemption, disability working allowance, job seekers allowance
(please include proof of entitlement – documentation showing name of claimer and benefit type)

Multiple copy rates are as follows:

2 copies £48, 3 copies £72, 4 copies £86, 5 copies £108, 6 copies £130, 7 copies £150, 8 copies £172, 9 copies £195, 10-50 copies £220, 51-100 copies £250, 101-150 copies £285.



Disability Now

£1.80 March 2000

The campaigning newspaper that puts you in the picture

Top dog

A day with Blunkett



Family matters

Disabled parents share their ups and downs

Win a weekend

Sailing, canoeing, climbing and more...



Jobs

p36-38 and on our website: www.disabilitynow.org.uk

MotabilityTM

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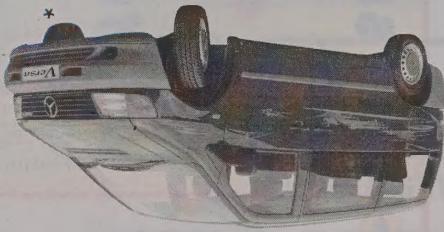
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